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Articles and letters dealing with any phase of the social problem are invited and will meet with earnest consideration. They must be written on one side of the paper only, and accompanied by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication. MSS. can only be returned if a stamped directed envelope accompanies them.

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Sydney—Bulletin	Paris—La Revolte	Barcelona—Revolucion Social
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Milwaukee—National Reformer	Liege—L'Avenir	Stockholm, Social-Demokraten
	Antwerp—De Werker	Malmö—Arbetet

FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM.¹

THIS book is of importance as embodying the views of a society which has been so active in lecturing on behalf of the Socialist movement. Indeed, some time ago many of us thought and said that the Fabians should publish a volume of their lectures; and, without wishing to carp at the present expression of opinions from which we of the Socialist League dissent in some measure, I cannot help wishing that such a volume had appeared about three years ago: for such a book published at that date would have dealt almost wholly with the economical and practical side of the question, and would have formed a kind of text-book for Socialists of all shades of opinion; and illuminated, as it would have been, by the brilliant and attractive style of

¹ "Fabian Essays in Socialism." 233 pp., bound in cloth with designs by Walter Crane and May Morris. May be ordered from *Commonweal* Office at 6s. post free.

some of the present essayists, would have been a most useful weapon of attack on the capitalist position as long as the battle might last; whereas a large part of the present volume is given up to the advocacy of the fantastic and unreal tactic which the Fabian Society has ex-cogitated of late, and which is at best tentative and temporary; is hardly constructed to last longer than the coming into power of the next Liberal government. The result is, that the clear exposition of the first principles of Socialism, and the criticism of the present false society (which latter no one knows how to make more damaging than Mr. Bernard Shaw, *e.g.*) is set aside for the sake of pushing a theory of tactics, which could not be carried out in practice; and which, if it could be, would still leave us in a position from which we should have to begin our attack on capitalism over again; a position, it may be said, which might be better or might be worse for us than our present one, as far as the actual struggle for the new society is concerned.

Mr. Sydney Webb, to judge from this book, is the leader in this somewhat disastrous move. He seems to enjoy all the humiliations of opportunism, to revel in it, so to say; and, indeed, he would appear to drag some of his fellow-writers somewhat unwillingly behind his chariot wheels. In his hands the *argumentum ad hominem* becomes a rather dangerously double-edged weapon. He is so anxious to prove the commonplace that our present industrial system embraces some of the machinery by means of which a Socialist system *might* be worked, and that some of the same machinery is used by the present municipalities, and the bureaucratic central government, that his paper tends to produce the impression of one who thinks that we are already in the first stages of socialistic life, all the while that "the poor we have always with us," and that the workers are worse off than they were under the feudal hierarchy. The retort of the enemy is obvious: "If we are already all Socialists, be happy! for *we* are happy!"

I give Mr. Sydney Webb all credit for sincerity in desiring the destruction of privilege; but it is strange that his rollicking opportunism should blind him to the fact that since he is sincere, the privileged will see through his attempt to hoodwink them into joining his attack on the privilege which is their life; while the discontented miserable workers will be discouraged by being practically told that they are already entering into the fruition of the Promised Land. They may well say: "Is it to be like this society, or *something* like it? We thought Socialism would be quite unlike our present position; if it is not to be so—." To avoid the disaster of gaining the doubtful alliance of the well-to-do at the expense of losing the support of the poor, it is surely necessary never to cease saying: The test of the realisation of Socialism will be the abolition of poverty.

Let us be clear on this point, that if the municipal Socialism of Mr. Sydney Webb were carried and put in practice, though it should *logically* (perhaps) lead to the destruction of privilege and poverty, yet *historically* it may do nothing of the kind; and that at any rate it is *not* Socialism, as it would still admit of the existence of competing classes. We should remember (as a Socialist said to me the other day) that under the Roman Empire municipal administration reached a pitch which we are very unlikely to come to in England in our day; but it had no destructive effect on the society of that epoch, which was based on chattel slavery and a pauper proletariat fed by the doles of the rich.

Mr. Sydney Webb takes in hand the "historic" basis of Socialism; but he is not more historic than any other of the paper-writers, indeed, less so than Mr. Shaw; his history only begins at the period just before the great industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. The industrial conditions of this period he treats too roughly; so roughly, indeed, as to be both inaccurate and misleading. It is true that some of the industries of the country were carried on in an individualistic way on the surface; but the greater part were under the rule of a most elaborate division of labour system, of which the medieval workmen knew nothing; and even the Yorkshire weavers (as well described by Mr. Illingworth), though they were masters of their tools, time, and materials within their workshops or houses, worked for a master (usually a neighbouring farmer) who exploited them, though mildly, and who in his turn sold the goods to a factor. The workmen had a world-market behind their backs though they were unconscious of it; the goods were made for profit, not primarily for use. In short, Mr. Sydney Webb has ignored the transition period of industry which began in the sixteenth century with the break up of the Middle Ages, and the shoving out of the people from the land. This transition is treated of by Karl Marx with great care and precision under the name of the "Manufacturing Period" (workshop period we might call it), and some mention of it ought to have been included in Mr. Sydney Webb's "history." I should not have felt bound to call attention to this blemish, however, if it were not, to my mind, another indication of the weak side of Mr. Sydney Webb and his followers; their tendency, namely, to over-estimate the importance of the *mechanism* of a system of society apart from the *end* towards which it may be used.

The great machine industries, though they have played an important part in the movement toward Socialism are not an essential condition of its existence; they may be used, as they are now, for the mere enslavement of the workers. They *will* be so used as long as they last, unless the workers in some form or other revolt against their slavery. On the other hand, as you may have a perfected system of co-operative production in a society of capitalism and wage-slavery, so you may have Socialism or Communism conjointly with a system of (so-called) individualist production. Nay, I feel certain that when the time comes, wherein we have forgotten the period of artificial poverty thrust upon us by capitalism and wage-slavery, the world will

in a large measure return to the individual system which once produced goods; a word which our present system has deprived of three parts of its meaning. Fourier put forward his truly inspired doctrine of attractive industry to a world that could not listen to him, so sunken as it was in misery and slavery. In times to come we shall need no social philosopher to tell us that if we cannot make our work attractive we shall still be slaves, even though we have no master but Nature. But to-day the world is still so sunken in misery and slavery, that in this book, honestly devoted to the regeneration of society, the assumption is everywhere made that labour must for ever be unattractive.

It is through no disrespect to the other writers in this remarkable book that I have given so much of my space to the consideration of Mr. Sydney Webb's paper, which is rather worse than better than the others, but simply because it shows most clearly the present position of the Fabian Society towards the Socialist movement.

Mr. Clarke's paper, though not quite avoiding the historical mistake of Mr. Sydney Webb, is clear and well written, and full of very valuable information; the latter portion, dealing with the special vagaries of American "Commerce," will serve as a text-book for the subject "until the times do alter." At the same time, though we may well hope that the extravagance of exploitation and contempt of the public shown by these "captains of industry" will lead us on toward Socialism, it is dangerous to rest our hopes on this development, as Mr. Bellamy does in his 'Looking Backward.' It may, after all, be nothing but a passing phase of that capitalist organisation of robbery, which surely must be attacked in front by the workers grown conscious of their slavery.

Mr. Sydney Olivier's "Moral Basis" is worth taking the trouble of careful reading. It is less obvious to the objections against the Fabian opportunism, partly no doubt because of the subject, but also partly, I think (judging from the paper), because of the turn of mind of the writer himself.

Mr. Graham Wallas's "Property Under Socialism" is clear and free from pedantry, and shows distinct sympathies with Communism; but it is confessedly dealing with the transitional period of Social Democracy, and consequently lacks the interest which a paper on more definite principles would have. There is, indeed, a tone of apology for the feebleness of Social Democracy running through it which might be sneered at by the bourgeois. One friendly objection I make to Mr. Wallas—he allows himself to speak of Socialism as "the system of property-holding which we call Socialism," and goes on to say that this is not necessarily the wished-for new life, "any more than a good system of drainage is health, or the invention of printing, knowledge." Here is a net statement of the exaggeration of the value of a mechanical system, which I have already complained of. Socialism is emphatically not merely "a system of property-holding," but a complete theory of human life, founded indeed on the visible necessities of animal life, but including a distinct system of religion, ethics, and conduct, which, if put into practice, will not indeed enable us to get rid of the tragedy of life, as Mr. Wallas hints, but will enable us to meet it without fear and without shame.

Mrs. Besant's article on "Industry Under Socialism" gives a sketch of State Socialism in practice in its crudest form, which, owing to the difficulty of the subject rather than from any shortcoming on her part, is not satisfactory,—could hardly be satisfactory to any one.

Mr. Hubert Bland's paper, "On the Outlook," is, for this book, a curious one, for it is a not very indirect attack on his optimistic democratic coadjutors. "It is not so much to the thing which the state does, as to the end for which it does it," is stating again what I have already put forward in this article, and there is a good deal in Mr. Bland's "Outlook" to the same purport. For the rest, Mr. Bland, of course, goes in for the Parliamentary struggle which we do not believe in; but he is too acute (his eye-sight being aided, I judge, by some traditional Tory instincts) not to see that the permeation of the Radicals by Socialism does not mean the creation of a Socialist-Radical Parliamentary party, but rather the absorption of the individuals of the Radicals, on the one hand, into the definite Socialist ranks, and, on the other, into the Whig phalanx; which latter, he, very rightly, looks on as a most formidable and enduring body of obstruction, capable of "holding the fort" long after the intelligence of the nation has declared for Socialism, and of holding it in the teeth of the logical sequence of economical events. So goes history.

I have yet to mention Mr. Bernard Shaw's two papers. Whatever I have to blame in them is comprised in the statement of my differences with the Fabian tactic which is so frankly condemned by Mr. Hubert Bland. Yet, at least, Mr. Shaw does not love opportunism for its own sweet self; for in his second lecture he definitely proclaims his shame of the course to which, as he thinks, circumstances have driven him; perhaps he only needs a little extra dose of Parliamentary tactics to disgust him so much as to force him to drop them altogether. Judging from the eloquence of the concluding part of his first paper, we can hardly suppose that that disgust will drive him into despair of the whole movement, and so deprive us of the services of one of the clearest heads and best pens that Socialism has got. As aforesaid, his criticism of the modern capitalistic muddle is so damaging, his style so trenchant, and so full of reserves of indignation and righteous scorn, that I sometimes wonder that guilty, i.e., non-Socialist, middle-class people can sit and listen to him. If he could only forget the Sydney-Webbian permeation tactic, even without putting any other in its place, what an advantage it would be to all of us! He would encourage his friends thereby; and as to his enemies—could he offend them more than he does now?

I have not had any space to quote passages from this book; I thought that there was no need to do so, as I assume that all Socialists will read it whether they agree with it or not. WILLIAM MORRIS.

IN PARIS.

WE shall soon have some new elections in and about Paris, as about half-a-dozen Boulangist deputies' elections have been invalidated on account of not being on the side of the bourgeois Republic. I should let this pass by unrecorded as being without interest for us Socialists, who don't care a damn who gets in or out of Parliament, but it furnishes a good opportunity to study the different schools of Socialism we have here. As internationalists it is good for us to know our men in case we want them.

Any foreigner coming to Paris is sure to meet good Socialists here so long as he speaks to the point, that is, as long as he does not wander away from his programme or principles; but if he takes to politics he is nearly sure to fall out with them. Although we have half-a-dozen schools at ordinary times, at the polls we have but two, or rather none at all; one school, the *Parti ouvrier*, is swallowed up by the Government; the other, the Blanquist school, goes with Boulanger.

There are, of course, parties that remain independent, such as the *Ligue Socialiste*, which has *L'Egalité* as their daily paper; the party of Vaillant, which is without a paper since the *Cri du Peuple* stopped; the Anarchists, again, whose weekly paper is *La Révolte*. Staunch revolutionaries as these three last schools may be, they are accused of voting for Boulangists.

It is a known fact that the *Parti ouvrier*, 25,000 strong in Paris, with nine town councillors and one and a-half deputies—one and a-half because Joffrin is no deputy in reality, being "elected" by the government in the place of Boulanger, who got 3,000 majority over him; the whole one being Dumay, who has done good work in former years. It is a known fact, I say, that this party get secret money to play the game of the government. In their opinion all who are not with them are with Boulanger; not being able to keep to their own guns, they see a traitor in any man outside of their ranks. They do not understand a man standing aloof from their petty miseries.

They are rather strong in Paris, where the *Bourse du Travail* is in their hands, but are nowhere in the country. It is not so easy to make friends there, as the municipality of Paris, on which nine of them are sitting, cannot give situations outside of the town, and therefore cannot corrupt the country.

I fell into the hands of these men when I came to Paris as a delegate to the International (Possibilist) Congress, and I confess that I regret it ever since. They are Nationalists, and as much so as are Irishmen. Their ostensible programme is, "Emancipation of the toiler by the toiler himself," but they should add, "with the gracious help of His Majesty Carnot and the Bourgeois Republic."

Between these Socialists and those who intended to make a good use of Boulanger's triumph by taking hold of the Government at the first opportunity, we have about 15,000 Anarchists, who are recruited from among the most intelligent and sensible workmen here. They do not vote, but they make more recruits at the present time than any other school. While there are lots of Socialists who waver between the Opportunists, the *Parti ouvrier*, and the Boulangists, once a man becomes an Anarchist he usually remains there. They are promoting now the idea of a general European strike, which, if it comes off, will about finish the present delightful system of society.

The *Ligue Socialiste* is a combination of discontented and practical Socialists. It was erected on the ruins of the *Cri du Peuple*. Its members are all young and ardent men, who would not feel at home with such veterans as Vaillant and Jules Guesde. One of them, Odin, is to be prosecuted for a speech he delivered a few weeks ago in Nantes. Chirac is another rising man. The *Ligue Socialiste* is to French Socialism what Sandhurst is to the English army. Its paper is *L'Egalité*, which was started by Jules Roques, a capitalist, and doubtful Socialist. The League counts about a thousand members, and has been about a year in existence. It goes in for the *grève générale* (general strike); has no programme; and thinks of taking the *Elysée* by storm one day—a quite possible thing, if we consider the kind of men it is composed of.

Vaillant, Minister of Public Instruction under the Commune, and still a Communist, has joined Jules Guesde, the Collectivist of old fame, and in spite of all these different opinions and schools of which I have been speaking, all other chiefs would be cast into the shade in the hour of action, and Vaillant would be the rallying-point, in whose presence all differences would disappear. His name reflects a moral strength that cannot be denied. He is watching the first opportunity to strike a decisive blow. Delegates of the twenty arrondissements meet every week, and he never fails to be there also. He does not care to take the chair; he sits in the crowd, and always speaks to the point. He personifies Revolution, no doubt about it. Let the Government make a blunder, and we shall see Vaillant on the *Place de la Concorde*, and with him a hundred thousand revolutionaries of every school, who have descended from the heights of Montmartre and Belleville to strike a final blow at the cursed reign of the money-bag.

A big meeting assembled last week to protest against the arbitrary arrest of Bertoya, a Spanish student of twenty-four, who was arrested in the street, without any warning, by a *mouchard*, who couldn't even tell him for what reason it was done. The reason is, that Bertoya is a Socialist, who has been expelled already from Germany, Italy, France, and probably from Belgium, on account of his opinions and propaganda.

Before the opening of the meeting, one heard all the different languages of Europe—Italian, German, Russian, Greek, etc.: it was a truly international meeting. A Greek student was the first speaker, and he protested strongly against this disgraceful persecution, saying, however, that it was a sure sign that governments must feel their own decay when they resorted to such means as these. Citizen Brunel said they should not protest in words only, but should try to make their words good by their works; which sentiment was received with vigorous applause, waving of hats, and many curses against law's order as carried out in this grand country of freedom, where every man has a vote, where idlers have a carefully guarded right to live without producing, and where every poor man has the right and many opportunities to starve while working. Hurrah for the Bourgeois Republic!

A. COULON.
Paris, 19th Jan., 1890.

It would be absurd, amongst any people, to regard as just all that the law sanctions. Would the Athenians have been more equitable if they had ratified the decrees of their thirty tyrants?—Cicero.