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Principles and Palliatives. The Maxton-Cook 'Ginger' Socialist Opponents of
Socialism. Is Socialism in Our Time Possible?

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Principles and Palliatives.

I doubt if the conferences between Ben Turner and Lord Melchett will make very much difference when Capital is bent upon a wage-cut, as it probably will be, more and more, with world-prices falling as they are bound to do in the staple industries. But these harmless and quite sensible conversations have had an extraordinary outcome in the alleged 'revolt' of Messrs. Maxton and Cook. There have been gingering revolts before. Lansbury led one; and it had for sole tangible result the founding of a Ginger Bookshop. Lansbury did not have a press for his effort, The Maxton-Cook-Wheatley banner of revolt has, however, been raised in what is for the press the Silly or Dead Season. Politics are in the doldrums. There has been nothing more sensational on the Parliamentary *tapis* than the discussions over the Prayer-Book, and the country regards that sort of controversy as not belonging to the Twentieth Century at all. It is a mediæval squabble. So the Maxton revolt has been featured with scareheads day after day, and those who would like to see a 'split' say there is one. Yet there is, to the view of any serious sociologist, next to nothing in it.

No Split.

A man may be a good Socialist and also a good Trade Unionist, just as he may be a good Socialist and a good carpenter as well. Trade Unionism exists primarily and originally for the defence of the employee under capitalist conditions. Socialism exists to make an end of capitalism. But while the Socialist would like the Co-operative Commonwealth now, he knows that he must wait (and work) till he gets it. Two things may be different without being mutually hostile.

It is right to try to keep the peace in industry. We have to live through the days that are till we come to the days that will be; and till the working class make up their minds that the organization of production and distribution is a public concern with

which the shareholder has no more to do than he has with any other public service, it is necessary and desirable that the peace should be kept, were it only for the reason that a breach of the peace always costs the working class more than it does the *rentiers*. When the worker stops work he stops earning, but the interest-mill goes on all the same. The interest-monger charges, not by the piece, but by all the time. He never loses a quarter. His is not a season trade; it is independent of weather, climate, flood, fire, earthquake, or barratry of the king's enemies. 'I think I hear a noise in the shop,' said Rachel to Ikey as they lay in bed. 'It's only the securities accumulatin' interest, ma tear,' said Ikey, after he had listened and heard nothing. There is only one way of stopping accumulation on the securities, and that is by the nation being its own security.

Palliatives.

Although the Peace-in-Industry movement is not reckoning with that, it is not necessarily a wrong movement for Socialists to have to do with. We are living under capitalism, and must accept the conditions more or less so long as we are. Ben Turner, though one of the oldest Socialists in Britain, is a trade union official, and he can no more say that he will not take any part in capitalistic arrangements than the rest of us can say that we will not eat bread, wear clothes, or live in houses provided all three of them by capitalist arrangements.

Like myself, Ben is, I think, an old S.D.F.er. The S.D.F. programme declared that nothing else and nothing less than Social-Democracy would solve our social problems. It nevertheless had a list of palliatives of capitalism, its executive realising that while we lived and worked with the ideal before us, it was necessary to make current conditions as little onerous as they could be made by minor adjustments under capitalism. Peace under capitalism - in any case an avoidance of strikes - is a palliative.

But - and here arises the danger - if the leaders of the Labour Party became widely identified with a policy of this kind, if it in any way came to be regarded as the aim, or even one of the important objects, of the Labour Party, such a view would tend to beget a highly undesirable mental confusion in the electorate. The average man is no politician, still less the average woman, The Labour Party is a Socialist Party, and Socialism does not mean a working arrangement with the Monds which will secure them in complete immunity to go on taking Something for Nothing indefinitely. Socialism means Stopping Their Game, gradually of necessity, but as rapidly as possible.

Socialism in Our Time.

As to Socialism in Our Time, certainly let us have as much *more* of that as possible. We have got a lot of Socialism already - even of Communism. The man who has no children pays for the education of the man who has ten. That is neither Socialism nor

Individualism. It is Communism. Communism means every man according to his needs; Socialism every man according to his deeds. We shall doubtless have more of both even within the lifetime of Ben Turner and myself, who are both of us considerably older than Mr. Maxton or Mr. Cook.

By all means let us get on with the work, already well begun, of transferring the business of the community from wasteful, incompetent, irresponsible Capitalism, with its touts and its advertising, its duplication of officials and premises and clerks, and the army of inspectors required to watch it and tax it and regulate it, to the organised community with its large-scale efficiency, its economy, its abolition of the swarms of officials in small private businesses, its matter-of-course honesty and integrity.

But complete Socialism in our time - all land, capital, machinery, and raw material in the hands of the State, the Municipalities, and the County Councils - that is a boyish conception, boyish even if we had the Labour Party in a permanent majority, as the Soviets are in Russia. I am not saying it could not be. I believe it could be done, if - but what an If is there! - we could get the majority of the people converted to desire it.

Doubtless Messrs. Maxton and Cook believe that the majority of the nation would fall into line at the behest of a Socialist Government, and they may argue that there would have to be a Socialist majority in the country before there would be a Socialist majority in Parliament. But it does not at all follow. It has not followed in Russia, great as are the powers of the Dictatorship there, and relatively simple as is the problem in an undeveloped homogeneous agricultural country.

A Socialist Government in this country would be a pacific government. Woolwich, Deptford, Chatham, Enfield, Portsmouth, Gosport, all the armament, garrison, and naval depot and dockyard towns, would have to turn to other ways of getting a living, and would have to recast their whole outlook upon and attitude to life. I do not say they could not do it. Krupp's works and the people of Essen have had to do it, under external compulsion. But how could external compulsion do it for Woolwich and the rest? Gradual disarmament if you like; imperceptible denudation of these places. But would the electors vote for candidates who were to take away their means of livelihood? I know that Harry Snell, a good Socialist for many years, represents Woolwich, and I should very much like to know the lines upon which he fought his elections. Probably on the plea that armament work should not be given out to private firms - a sound enough plea from present-day standpoints, but not the standpoint of more or less complete disarmament.

Let us assume, however, that Woolwich could be persuaded that the Arsenal works could be and would be turned over to peace production. What displacement this would cause elsewhere - say in Sheffield, Birmingham, Lancashire, Durham, and

Glasgow; and what problems of readjustment would be caused all round, taking time and pains to solve!

Agriculture and Crafts.

Britain is an exporting country. Textiles, machinery, hardware, clothing, coal - all are export industries, and all are in a bad way, which must become worse. Other countries already supply and will more and more supply their own requirements as manufactured in the great machine industries. The fall of exports means a fall in shipping, so that Clyde, Tyne, Mersey, Wear, Tees, and Thames are all to be hit.

With the foreign markets largely lost, agriculture has to be re-organised so that we shall grow the bulk of our own food once more. And this will be the most stupendous problem of all. For the rural worker does not like his work or his life, and the town worker would like them still less. Address a city audience, even of professed Socialists, and see how they receive the propaganda of back to the land. Last month I cited the case of a rich man of goodwill who set up a number of unemployed city slummites in a poultry farm, leaving them freely to work out their own social salvation. They not only did not make good, but one of them committed suicide, believing that he was doomed to a life of hopeless degradation, a view with which the survivors on the farm seem largely to have agreed.

I do not say this ridiculous outlook cannot be got over. Necessity is a grand persuader. But I do claim that the necessary adjustments - *individual* as well as social - will take a long time.

This is not making love to the inevitableness of gradualness. To accept the inevitable is not making love to it. But at least let us not blind ourselves to the great obstacles. The chief of these for the moment is to get our urban Labour friends to see that the problem is not to socialise all industry as it is, but to help to secure industries - agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, and crafts - that would be worth socialising. The export industries are doomed. They can survive only if those employed are prepared to compete with the sweated labour of the world.

If, with a Labour Government in power, we socialised one industry a month, would it not be tremendously good going? But there are hundreds of industries, and thousands of towns, in which the adjustments would have to be carried out - obsolete plant scrapped, unsuitable premises closed, new premises built, office staffs abolished, endless consolidations effected slowly and carefully, tens of thousands of small concerns being left alone as not worth socialising. The mines would probably be rapidly closed down, white coal for power, light, and heat being substituted. What would Mr. Cook propose to do with the miners enfranchised from the deadly slavery of the pit? Put them to navvying, road-making, and agricultural work of course; but think of the labour and time required for that sort of adjustment! It can all be done and will be done; but the improvisations effected in war-time all took time, and

everybody was willing for them *then*, because the upset was regarded as only temporary.

Then there is, of course, the contingency of a change of Government, with a reversal of policy.

Ignoring the Pioneers.

One is amused to see Mr. Maxton date the Socialist movement from thirty years ago, and his invocation of the memory of Keir Hardie. Hardie was dour and staunch, and he was the first representative of independent Labour in Parliament. But there were brave and wise and cultured men before Agamemnon. Has Mr. Maxton forgotten Marx and Morris and Bebel and Liebknecht and Bellamy and Gronlund and Hyndman and Champion and Cunninghame-Graham - the latter two the advisers and inspirers of Hardie, whom I knew in 1888 as by no means free of Liberal attachments. During his candidature for Mid-Lanark he came to Aberdeen along with Cunninghame-Graham and spoke under the auspices of the Junior Liberal Association, with Professor Minto in the chair. His utterances that night were so little Socialist and so little Independent Labour that Peter Esslemont, the Liberal M.P. for East Aberdeenshire, who spoke from the same platform, said to Hardie, 'See that you win the seat.' I was there, and have not forgotten.

The Class Antagonism in History and in Fact.

There never *was* anything clean-cut about Hardie. He repudiated the Class Antagonism, but himself fought with a dour class bitterness never shown by earlier Socialists, who accepted the antagonism as a matter of fact and therefore of logic, but themselves often belonged to the well-to-do class, and had the urbanity of their class. The *fact* of Class Antagonism is historically so clear that to gainsay it is to put oneself out of court as lacking either in perception or in sincerity. If two men build a boat and three men claim it, there is a clear antagonism of interest between these two and the third claimant. One of the two may be a simple fellow who, hocused by soft white hands and pleasant speech, is good-naturedly prepared to let the plausible idler go shares in the boat and its earnings, even to give the lion's share to the onlooker who has hypnotised him. But if the other boatbuilder says 'Hands off! you have no claim,' he may be in the minority, but is he not right? Multiply those three into classes, and we have society as it is,

Plato stated the Class Antagonism in words of trenchant clearness. So did Sir Thomas More. So did Montaigne. The very constitution of Parliament as an assembly of 'estates,' or conditions in life, each class being *directly represented as such*, showed that the idea of a conflict of interests between classes was inherent in the minds of those* who framed the basis of representation seven centuries ago.

*Simon de Montfort, 'the Great Earl' (of Leicester), as the chief of those who fought King John and his son Henry III., and secured Magna Charta and the Mother of

Parliaments. See 'The Evolution of the Fourth Estate' (5th edition), and 'The Class War' (8th edition), published from the office of THE GATEWAY. Why has no one written a book doing honour to 'Simon the Righteous,' far-sighted statesman and hero?

That there is no antagonism of interest between those who live *by* labour and those who live *upon* it, as the mistletoe upon the oak, is a claim as preposterous as would be the claim that there is no antagonism between the slave and the master, the hunted and the hunter, the killer and his victim, the buyer who wishes to buy cheaply and the seller who seeks to sell dearly. Workmen who are not Socialists have always recognised the Class Antagonism, and the meetings of trades unions have been barred to members of the employing class. It is true that workers forget their antagonism on polling day, and vote for the employer they fight through their union; but that is an anomaly which the other side will not imitate: *they* will not vote Labour.

No 'Faction Fight.'

Mr. Hardie said that the theory of the Class Antagonism lowered Socialism to the level of a faction fight. But the 19½ millions 'gainfully occupied,' with their wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters usefully 'occupied' with house-work to the number of many millions more, are not a faction. They are the nation. That they should take measures to compel the minority of hangers-on to do their share of the nation's work does not constitute a faction fight. It is the nation protecting itself against parasitism.

Messrs. Maxton, Cook, and Wheatley do right to emphasise the abolition of capitalism as being the policy of Labour. But Ben Turner is equally right to do all he can to stop the strike, which, even when 'successful,' represents the dog trying to catch his tail, in Mr. Smillie's true figure. So that there is certainly no conflict between Turner's Tactics and Maxton's Manifesto. It is said the employers associated with Lord Melchett are not comprehensively representative. There is a Conciliation Board already, and it does not seem to function to much purpose. There is probably no danger of a large-scale strike for a long time to come. The fatality of 1926 cast unforgettable discredit upon the strike as a weapon. Even so, the withdrawal of labour can never be finally abandoned under capitalism. It would still remain to the individual worker even if it were forbidden to or abandoned by the group,

A Field Providing Legitimate 'Sensations.'

That there should be restlessness in the Labour camp is not unnatural, human nature loving stir and sensations as it does. Labour is not in office. The politics of the hour are devoid of interest. But politics can be made interesting in a quite legitimate way, either in Parliament or out of doors, without dissensions in the ranks, or any appearance of turning our guns upon one another,

Homework for Labour M.P.s.

If Mr. Maxton wants to get on with any specific political job of work, it can be done without raising any standard of general revolt. If he will unearth some of the many scandals, as Mr. Tom Johnston does, and ventilate them in the House, as Messrs, Johnston, Kenworthy, and John Beckett do, he is on the very ground to do it. Somerset House is close by St. Stephen's Hall. If, on the other hand, he wants to carry the evangel into the dark places of the land, there is abundance of room for that, and it can be done at week-ends and in the off-season when Parliament is not sitting. The North of Scotland is a neglected area. The migrants are pouring out of it into Aberdeen and the South, as well as across the seas. We need somebody to come here and tell the people to sit tight and to set their own house in order so that men shall not be driven from home if they wish to stay. Mr. Tom Johnston has given much attention to the scandals of the West Highlands, the landless crofters, the men of Erribol, the hold-up practised by the McBraynes with their extortionate freight rates and the killing tolls extorted for the use of their private bridges.

If Mr. Maxton wants to be useful, there is plenty of work to be done in the small northern places. Somebody is needed to correct the over-awing influence of Maharajahs, Millionaires, and Colonels in the Highlands, and a member of Parliament could do more than any citizen without a handle to his name.

There are millions of people in county constituencies who have never heard a Labour speaker. In the little town where I write we have had no public Labour meeting for months, and no meeting addressed by a Labour M.P. has been held for years. The press assures its readers that British farming is the best in the world. There is no Maxton or other to supplement what I have told them again and again that the originally poor soil of Flanders produces £20 worth of crops to the acre as compared with an average of £4 per acre in Britain,

Neglected Areas.

On all this and much more there is the greatest need for propaganda. To run candidates without years of steady preparation is to seek to reap where we have not sown. And the northern counties of Scotland form one of the neglected areas.

The annual report just issued by the Scottish Board of Agriculture gives figures which are typical of the rural areas in England as well.

In 1927 another 237,838 acres went out of arable cultivation. And although this land would revert to grass, there was nevertheless a fall in the production of meat of nearly a million cwt., as compared with the previous year. It is not surprising that there was a further heavy decrease in the number of agricultural workers, fully double that of the preceding year in fact.

If agriculture shows these figures, need we be surprised if the statistics of Poor Law relief should be equally eloquent of the failure of capitalism? In Scotland in 1878, with no old age pensions, no widows' pensions, and no 'dole,' there were 26 persons

per 1000 of population in receipt of Poor Law relief. Last year, *with* all the latter-day relieving agencies, there were 49 persons per 1000 in receipt of Poor relief. So that we may put the amount of indigence at fully double what it was half-a-century ago. In 1927 the number of unemployed persons was 10.1 per cent. of the insured population.

In spite of all assurances received as to the improvement in trade and the diminution in unemployment, the Ministry of Health reports that 'The expenditure incurred during 1927 by about 100 Parish Councils was £1,636,400, as compared with an expenditure in 1925 of £725,373 and in 1926 of £1,346,300. Examination of the figures for the various parishes shows that the improvement [of trade] was almost wholly confined to the parishes in the Clyde area, and is probably due to the improved position in the shipbuilding industry.'

The Sleepy Hollows.

Is there not still plenty to do in the way of carrying the war into the enemy's territory - that is to say, the constituencies? Labour M.P.s go where they get the biggest meetings. They ought to do the reverse. It is the sleepy hollows that keep Labour out of power, and setting up flags of negation against party leadership would seem to be the last thing that is needed.

Let us get on with the nationalization and municipalization which Socialism stands and has always stood for - the advocacy of them in detail now and the carrying of them whenever and wherever we have the power to do so. The Labour Party has just issued a programme of 22,000 words, which, while it re-affirms the nationalization of land, coal, transport, motive power, and life insurance, is mainly concerned with re-adjustments of, or restrictions upon, Individualism, such as control of banking, increased taxation of the rich and relief to the smaller payers of income tax, pensions, credits to farmers, publicity given to business accounts, hours and wages of agricultural workers, and so on, some of them slightly questionable and debatable perhaps.

No Fashions in Socialism.

This multiplicity of detail is necessary in *progressive* political electioneering, though a reactionary party needs nothing of the kind. These minor items, however, give rise to an idea that we have abated, or at any rate indefinitely deferred, the indispensable demand for Public Ownership of all Public Utilities. They also give rise to the idea that there are *fashions* in Socialism. Thus a Labour M.P., probably with these programmes of palliatives in mind, writes of my advocacy of the Socialism that was current 'twenty years ago,' and a Bootle correspondent, who is a magistrate and an old campaigner, told me that his son regarded his and my Socialism as old-fashioned.

But there are no fashions in Social-Democracy. There can be no Socialist substitute for collective ownership and administration of the means of production and service.

Many professed Socialists hang back from the application of their principles, and propound 'novelties' such as the Minimum Wage, which is simply the Law of Maximum and Minimum refurbished 130 years after it was tried (and failed) in Revolutionary France. Danton, the most constructive genius of the Revolution, not only aimed at fixing a minimum wage, but also saw that its necessary complement was the fixing of maximum prices. The complex combination broke down, as said, for a variety of reasons, not difficult to estimate.

The Doubts of Professed Disciples.

On the other hand, the believers in the minimum wage are doubting Thomases as regards Socialism. They say they do not want to socialise the railways, because they are not paying, and are threatened by other means of transport, Gasworks, because electricity is the illuminant of the future, Tramways, because they are being crippled by motor buses, Coal, because the mines are a losing enterprise, and water for the generation of electricity is the motive power of the future.

These Socialist opponents of Socialism do not see that our industries are being killed by capitalism and that Socialism would save such of them as are worth saving. They do not see that Control is the grand power which is needed for social functions as it is for the individual. Over-production, over-capitalization, over-competition, with under-remuneration, are the great causes why our staple industries and services are so rapidly tending towards bankruptcy. Socialism and Socialism alone would cure all these forms of reciprocal excess and shortage.

There may be changes in the productions and the services we need to socialise; but that modern society can go on much longer without social organization is incredible as it is undesirable. Is it not enough that the State and the Municipality can do what the capitalist cannot do and knows better than to attempt? Is it not enough that public authorities do what the capitalist once did, and does it infinitely better, cheaper, and more efficiently than he did?

Collectivism in Operation.

I have just returned from a visitation of the quarries, plant, and road work in process under the District Committee of the County Council of which I am a member. As one watched the powerful machinery, the diligent workers, and the way in which stretches of road were covered with tar-mixed metal, grouting, blinding, and rolling going on with ideal rapidity, and then turned to the makeshift buildings and the ill-fenced fields, yellow with weeds where they had not returned to grass, and thought of the difference between the wages, hours, and housing conditions of the farm labourers as compared with those of the road workers, how could anyone fear the soundness and workability of the Socialist principle?

'In the Meantime.'

I have stressed the difference between principles and palliatives because too many people fail to distinguish between an ideal to be kept in view as a standard, on the one hand, and temporary expedients or instalments of the ideal, on the other. Control of banking is, for instance, a step towards the national ownership of banks.

The press alleges that the Labour Programme is adapted from the Liberal Yellow Book. But the question of priority is easily settled where proposals tending towards public ownership are concerned. The Liberal Party has always till now regarded public ownership as at best a necessary evil, to be adopted only when nothing else will serve, whereas the Labour Party has all along been avowedly Socialist. The Liberal Party still repudiates Socialism, yet as to all main problems - Coal, Power, Land, Labour - has only diluted Socialism to offer, the dilutions intended to save capitalism. The Labour Party adapts its Socialism only to existing conditions, with the ending of capitalism always in view. The Liberal Party has a rich man for leader, and a war-chest provided by the sale of titles to rich men, and its outstanding members live, and want to continue to live, upon dividends. The Labour Party is a party of workers with hand and brain, whose published balance sheets show an income derived from the regular contributions of wage and salary earners. Which party is most likely to have a programme of the strongest Socialist tendency and to be sincere in its desire to carry it?

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