POST−INDUSTRIALISM

ARTHUR J. PENTY

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"I don't see no sense in always grumblin'," Crass proceeded, "these things can't be altered; you can't expect there can be plenty of work for everyone with all this 'ere labour−savin' machinery what's been invented."

"Of course," said Harlow, "the people what used to be employed on the work what's now done by machinery has to find something else to do. Some of 'em goes to our trade, for instance. The result is there's too many at it, and there ain't enough work to keep 'em all goin'."

"Yes," cried Crass, eagerly, "that's just what I say. Machinery is the real cause of all the poverty. That's what I said the other day."

"Machinery is undoubtedly the cause of unemployment," replied Owen, "but it's not the cause of poverty; that's another matter altogether."

The others laughed derisively.

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists,
by ROBERT TRESSALL.

MR. CHESTERTON'S PREFACE

MR. PENTY, the author of this book, is one of the two or three truly original minds of the modern world. In the very first chapter he proceeds to do what is always done by minds that are original; he goes back to origins. For this reason the men whose minds are narrowed by contemporary conventions always accuse any such thinker of being a sort of romantic reactionary. An absurd legend has been manufactured among the critics who have reviewed Mr. Penty's remarkable books (and who have in some cases even read them), to the effect that he regards the medieval period as a golden age of human perfection, and wishes the modern world to make a careful copy of it. His critics talk for all the world as if he had merely recommended us to wear pointed shoes or to practise archery. So far is this from being true that his historical studies of medievalism, which are really historical, condemn many medieval things which it is comparatively common to admire; such as the cult of the Roman Law. But this book is not a study of medieval, but of modern conditions. And from modern conditions alone we could deduce the absurdity of this attempt to silence anybody with a charge of sentimentalism, merely because he wishes for a reasonable restoration of certain things which were lost by accident or by anarchy. At the very time that such journalists are flinging about the charge of reaction, they are filling their newspapers with the necessity for reconstruction. When people wish to rebuild the villages that were burned in Belgium, we do not describe them as dreamers so deluded as to think that Belgium before the war was a paradise of perfect human happiness. When people hope to re− establish pre−war conditions of normal production or exchange, we do not charge them with thinking that the pre−war period was a golden age. We merely recognize the fact that certain things normal to the nations have been destroyed by an abnormal disaster, and that we must reconstruct them as well as we can. Now, it is Mr. Penty's thesis that the recent rush of commercialism and industrialism, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have led us to an abnormal disaster; and that it remains for us to recur to the more stable social ideal, recognized not only in the Middle Ages, but in some degree in most ages, and by the great mass of mankind. That is the thesis, so far as medievalism is concerned; it is the business of the critics to refute the thesis; and it will require a very different sort of criticism to refute it.

But the general power to return to origins is an even greater matter; and what it needs is intellectual independence. Indeed, there is an unconscious truth in the phrase of shallow people who talk of a man like Mr. Penty as if he were behind the times. In one sense he is behind the times; as we speak of a man being behind the scenes. The man behind the scenes is at the back of things and the beginning of things. He knows where the actors come from, and how the whole performance began. He has seen all the machinery, and can consider the play as a play, and not as a temporary illusion. Mr. Penty has seen the machinery of the modern world and does not think much of it; he has seen the illusion of progress and prosperity which it produced on the crowd, at least to some extent and for a time, and he knows it is an illusion. That is to say, he is what so few modern people can be, he is outside the modern world, and in a sense surrounds it. He can judge it freely, not merely by comparison with a real past, but by comparison with a possible future. And, as a matter of fact, that future is becoming more and more possible. It is the present that is becoming impossible. Those who blame Mr. Penty for looking to the past for an alternative to industrialism, do not realize that industrialism itself shows many signs of soon becoming a thing of the past. What is called industrial unrest might more truly be described as industrial collapse; and the things that are not collapsing are exactly the old things that it was the fashion to regard as decaying, such as the ancient peasantries of Christendom. It is these modernists who are behind the times; it is these materialists who have tied their fortunes to a failure; and it is the modern industrial city that has become a home of lost causes. These people do not understand the meaning of the Bolshevisk concession to the peasantry, of the revival of Italy, of the new power of France, of the successful revolution in Ireland.

What is wanted in this transition is a practical policy for England; and Mr. Penty propounds his practical policy. As he points out, it is really far more practical, in the sense of adaptable to existing conditions, than the alternative schemes of a more elaborate and systematized Guild Socialism, let alone the elaborate and systematized schemes of the Fabians, the Marxians, or the Douglasites. But the special thesis of this book, as distant from the author's other books, is set out much too clearly to need any anticipatory amplification. From the first discovery of the error of Socialism about its own origin, to the final forecast of a real reconstruction analogous to the real reconstructions of the past, the reader can follow the argument in detail, and differ or agree

as the case may be; but if he is intelligent he will certainly not dismiss it as a fad or fable about the good old times. I am content here to express something of the gratitude felt by all thinking people to the author, and to leave the book to speak for itself. G. K. CHESTERTON.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

AMONG the changes in thought that have come about as a result of the war, the most significant is the changed attitude towards Industrialism. Before the war it was taken for granted by most people as a thing of permanence and stability, while it was everywhere assumed that whatever evils were associated with it were incidental, and would disappear before the march of progress.

Nowadays all that is changed. It is generally admitted that the progress on which we prided ourselves before the war was for the most part illusory. Our comfortable optimism could not stand the shock of four years of war. The fact that the mechanical triumphs of our civilization so readily lent themselves to the purposes of destruction has destroyed, once and for ever, that hypnotic belief in the ultimate beneficence of science and machinery that was the faith of our generation, while the anticipated discovery of some method of liberating the stores of sub−atomic energy is looked upon with real apprehension by those who recognize its potentialities for evil, since, unless the moral development of man can keep step with his technical discoveries, it may well prove to be the most disastrous thing that has happened in the history of mankind.

Simultaneously with this alarm in regard to the discoveries of science, the unrestricted use of machinery is being interrogated. Before the war protests against the abuse of machinery were mainly of two kinds: economic and æsthetic. There was the economic objection of those who found their labour displaced by some new invention, and the æsthetic objection of the followers of Ruskin and Morris. But neither of them were taken very seriously. The complaints of those who found their labour displaced were not listened to because such inconveniences were supposed to be inevitable to a time of transition, while the æsthetic objection was treated by most men with something approaching contempt. Nowadays, however, all this is changing. It is becoming apparent to an ever− increasing number of thinking people that there is a definite connection between the economic deadlock that has overtaken society and our mechanical methods of production, since, apart from such methods, it is obvious that the problem on such a gigantic scale could never have come into existence. Educationalists are becoming interested, for they see all their work being undone the moment a boy leaves school for the factory, while the recent publication of Dr. Austin Freeman's Social Decay and Regeneration, of which Dr. Inge, in reviewing it,

I. THE FORGOTTEN PURPOSE OF THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

IT is a recurring tragedy in the history of ideas and movements that proposals originally advanced as means to ends come to be looked upon as ends in themselves, while the original purpose which they were intended to serve becomes obscured and forgotten. Some such fate appears to have overtaken the Socialist Movement, and is the secret alike of its intellectual confusion and its practical impotence. Thus, the nationalization of land, capital, and the means of production and exchange, which, in spite of its modification by Guild theory, is still the substance of Socialist faith, has come to be regarded as the final aim and purpose of Socialist activity, while the problem of machinery, which this proposal was originally intended to solve, has not merely been forgotten, but its very existence is denied. An inquiry into the history of Socialist thought will demonstrate this beyond a shadow of doubt.

From a sociological point of view, the period from 1760 to 1825, in which the foundation of modern political and reform activity was laid, exhibits four phases: "The first was purely parliamentary and constitutional; its protagonists, Wilkes and `Junius,' fought against the oligarchy and the remnants of personal monarchy. The second phase was mainly agrarian; the effect of the rapid rate of enclosing farms and commons, as well as of the improvements in agriculture, turned the attention of revolutionaries towards agrarian reform; its writers were Spence, Ogilvie and Paine. The third phase was caused by the enthusiasm for the French Revolution on the part of the English intellectuals and London artisans, whose minds had been prepared by the theories which were current in the antecedent two phases; its writers were William Godwin, the youthful Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, and John Thelwall. The fourth phase was that of the industrial revolution proper, the first critical writer of which was Charles Hall, followed by Robert Owen and his school, and the anti−capitalist critics, Ravenstone, Hodgskin, and several anonymous writers: the poet of this phase was Shelley."

II. THE UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES CONCERNING MACHINERY

WE have seen that the Socialist ideal of reconstructing society on some co−operative or communal basis had its origin in the fact that the unrestricted use of machinery was found to be incompatible with a competitive society; that the problems growing out of machine production found a central position in Socialist theory from the days of Owen to Marx, but were lost sight of and forgotten by the Fabians, who came to advocate the nationalization of land, capital, and the means of production and exchange as the sole end of Socialist activity instead of being merely a means to an end, as they were regarded by the early nineteenth−century Socialist thinkers; the end, of course, being the adaptation of society to the changed conditions brought about by large−scale mechanical production.

This is the first cause of confusion that has overtaken the Socialist Movement. So far from being able to find a solution for the problems of society, the movement has forgotten what is the problem it originally set out to solve. In these circumstances, the first step towards extricating society from the chaos into which it has fallen is to restore the problem of the relation of men to machines to the central position that it occupied in social theory before the Fabian Society came along. This is a necessity of clear thinking and an issue quite apart from the question as to what our particular attitude towards the problem of machinery may be. The fact that the problems of machinery occupy a central position in the social theories of both Ruskin and Marx should give us pause to think. That two great thinkers, who came to diametrically opposed conclusions about almost everything, should yet be agreed that in any analysis of modern society the problem of machinery should be given priority to all others, suggests that it should not be lightly dismissed, while the fact that modern thinkers who have chosen to ignore it find themselves not only entirely impotent to effect a change, but bankrupt of ideas as well, suggests that their premises are insufficient. In some way or other they hold their ideas in a false perspective, and though they may protest against any reintroduction of the problem of machinery as being merely an addition to the difficulty, yet I am persuaded that it will in the end turn out to be a simplification, in the same way that the introduction of a fresh term to an intricate irreducible mathematical expression will at times bring it to unity.

If then we may be agreed that the problem of machinery is fundamental, let us pass on to consider what our attitude towards machinery should be, and in this connection it will be convenient to begin by considering the prophecies of Marx−−to what extent they have been fulfilled and to what extent they have been falsified by experience. For Marx, in his whole− hearted belief in the ultimate beneficence of machinery, is close to the modern mind.

In the magnitude of the unemployed problem to−day we may see at the same time the disproof of the Fabian notion of indefinite industrial expansion and the fulfilment of the prophecy of Marx that the last phase of capitalism would be marked by the appearance of a large and increasing army of unemployed. As the Fabians denied that such a thing could happen, we recognize that Marx had a grip of something fundamental that the Fabians had not. That something is the dependence of finance on machinery. Marx saw clearly that under a system of competitive enterprise machinery is inevitably used more and more, and that development upon such lines placed finance entirely at the mercy of machinery−−the progressive application of which would determine the various phases of industrial development through which society would pass until the climax was reached. The truth of this interpretation is confirmed by the situation developed in Germany before the war. It is customary to attribute this situation to the failure of Germany's system of credit banks−− to the fact that she had built up her industrial system on borrowed money. But the great fact behind the financial situation is that in the fifteen years before the war Germany had quadrupled her output. The ratio of productivity in Germany due to never slackening energy, technique and scientific development was far outstripping the ratio of demand. Production was no longer controlled by demand but by plant, and the increased pressure of competition had so increased the overhead expenses that no furnace could be damped down and no machine stopped; for the overhead expenses would then eat up the profits and the whole industrial organization come crashing down, bringing with it national bankruptcy. e repaired so long as man remains a slave of the machine. And so all art and culture disappear from life, for it cannot be kept alive by the few. All must share it or none. If any art is to revive, it must be an art that is the common possession of the whole people, and such an art cannot be grafted on a machine society. On the contrary, the arts (if we may so call them) that a machine population can share, are the arts of the cinemas and the

gramophone, and the only culture is the culture of mechanism, whether it be motor−cars or aeroplanes. For these are the only cultures that are a part of the lives men live. If this is the art and culture that Marx meant when he predicted that a new art and culture would arise in response to the stimuli of the machine, then in this limited sphere his prediction has been fulfilled. But they are not the arts and culture which I, at any rate, associate with the idea of the millennium, for in no sense can they be regarded as communal arts. On the contrary they are the arts of a plutocracy.

Just in the same way that machine production has created an atmosphere inimical to the arts, it has created an atmosphere antipathic to religion. The really practical challenge to Christian morals does not come from the materialist philosophy but from the machine. The old rationalists denied the supernatural character of Christianity, but they did not challenge its moral code. That challenge, it is to be observed, came from those whose ultimate belief was in the beneficence of machinery, who in some vague way imagined that machinery had rendered Christianity obsolete much in the same way that it was rendering the handicraft obsolete. Foremost among those who so believed was Marx, for the new morality that he postulates is something that is to arise as a consequence of the dissolution of the fabric of existing society by the machine, and remembering how the factory system tends to break up family life there is no doubt a connection between the two. Such an antagonism is felt by men who have lived under happier conditions in the East. Let me quote the words of a Hindoo, Rab Bharati, on this question. He says:

"What is this civilization anyway? I have lived in four of its chief centres for about five years. During that time I have studied this civilization with the little light with which my Brahmin birth has blessed me. And I must confess that I have been deeply pained by the facts that study has revealed to me. This vaunted civilization has raised selfishness to a religious creed. Mammon to the throne of God, adulteration to a science, falsehood to a fine art. . . . It has created artificial wants for man, and made him a slave of work to satisfy them; it has made him ever restless within and without, robbed him of leisure−− the only friend of high thought. He knows no peace, hence he knows not himself nor his real object in life. It has made him a breathing, moving, hustling, fighting, spinning machine−−ever working, never resting, never knowing even the refreshing rest of a sound sleep. It has made him a bag of live nerves ever stretched to high tension. It has sapped the foundation of home life−−and, its trunk separated from its roots, its roof−tree threatens to fall, shaken by each passing breeze. Its vulgar haste and love of sensation are invading even the realm of religion, which is being classed with fads and crazes. Its boasted scientific inventions have done more harm than good to humanity's best and permanent interests; they serve only the surface of life which alone its votaries live and know."

III. MACHINERY AND THE SUBDIVISION OF LABOUR

WE have seen that the Socialist theory of social evolution, based upon the assumption that machinery is a creative force, has been entirely falsified by experience, since so far from new forms of social order and new traditions arising in response to the stimuli of the machine as Marx predicted, the unrestricted use of machinery has proved to be purely destructive. In these circumstances it is urgent that the Socialist Movement should reconsider its position, for what is the use of preaching economic theories which depend on the assumption that its evolutionary doctrine is true, when that doctrine has been entirely disproved by the facts?

It is true, of course, that for some time Socialists have been a little chary about social evolution. But they hesitate to make the deduction which a recognition of the failure of their central doctrine demands. If there is no evidence of a continuous social improvement, then we should recognize that society is constantly losing its way and that it may actually be reversing progress. And if it be true that society does go astray, then it is urgent that we should seek to return to the point at which we lost our way. In daily life we pursue this policy, but in the big fundamental things we do nothing of the kind. We answer those who affirm that we are on the wrong track with the assertion that we cannot put the clock back and commit one political folly after another, vainly imagining that the social confusion consequent upon economic injustices in the past may be used as a foundation on which to build the millennium of the future. Yet the evidence that industrialism is a blind alley from which we must retrace our steps or perish becomes more conclusive every day. Whatever excuse there may be for the mistaken judgments of Owen and Marx, there is simply no excuse for Socialists to−day, for "the cancer of industrialism has

begun to mortify and its end is in sight," while "in a thousand ways the lineaments of the old world are reappearing through the dissipating smoke."

Once we recognize these things, we begin to understand the significance of Medievalism. Its roots are not to be found in any idealization of the past, as our critics ignorantly suppose, but in frankly facing the facts of the present, for once the human mind finds itself unable to contemplate the future of industrialism with equanimity, it inevitably turns to the past. Such being the case, Medievalism is not romanticism, but the last word in utilitarianism as all must sooner or later find out. Its value as an ideal is that it provides a convenient rallying−point from which the root fallacies of our civilization may be attacked. It challenges the conception of progress with its indiscriminating industrial advance by exalting an age which, whatever may have been its defects (and they are not to be denied), was at any rate free from the defects of the present, and thus it provides something concrete and tangible around which our thinking may crystallize. In so far as the modern world is not interested in Medievalism, it is not because it is realistic, but because it is superficial and romantic, because it lives on phrases and disregards things, because it is satisfied with words like progress, emancipation, liberty, which can be twisted to mean anything; because it hates definiteness and dogmas which are the necessary foundation of all clear thinking; because it thinks it can eat its cake and have it, and is not interested in fundamental things. For an interest in fundamental things inevitably creates an interest in Medievalism; for in it the beginnings and the origin of things that exist to−day are to be found. Hence some familiarity with the Middle Ages is necessary to see the modern world in its proper perspective, to enable us to distinguish clearly between primary and secondary ideas. And when we do learn so to distinguish, we begin to understand why the modern world must retrace its steps as it will do before long. For if it can no longer look forward with confidence, the time is not far distant when it will begin to look back. When that happens, the day of salvation will be in sight, for we shall be in possession of a vision that will co−ordinate our manifold activities.

The choice, as I see it, is not between whether we are to go forward or to go back, but whether we are to continue drifting towards an inevitable social destruction or resolutely retrace our steps until we rest again on a firm foundation. Modernists who devise this scheme and that to cure our social ills lose sight of the fact that modern society is in such a state of unstable equilibrium that it cannot stand still. It must either move forward or move back. Now that we are all agreed that we cannot with safety move any further forward, wisdom suggests that the only rational thing to do is to go back. That the modern world should hesitate to make such a choice is not surprising, for the implications are enormous, while it is so much easier to swim with the current than against it; therefore, unless people are very clear in their minds they shrink from such a decision. Yet come to it finally they must; if not by choice, then by pain and suffering, for there is no third alternative. It is quite useless to attempt to reform secondary things whilst ignoring primary and fundamental ones. It is only playing at reform. If there is no public interest in these questions, it is our business to create an interest, and not to wait until it is too late.

But, as a matter of fact, there is a public interest in these questions, but unfortunately not in reformist circles, whose members live in a world of economic abstractions. The Socialist Movement began, as we have shown, in an attempt to find a remedy for the problems which followed the introduction of machinery, and to that problem it will return before long, because nowadays, when there are no new markets left to exploit, every new machine must result in the displacement of labour. This fact must force the question to the front. The subject has to be created. It would be no use beginning with any cut and dried scheme as to what requires to be done until people are familiar with the facts. For the present, all that can be demanded is that before any new machine is permitted to be used it shall be made the subject of a public inquiry, which shall take evidence as to its effect upon conditions of labour, upon employment, upon the crafts and arts, and all other social and economic implications. Only when the Commission was satisfied that its application would be beneficial should its use be allowed. If labour were displaced, those who profited by the new invention should be made responsible for the maintenance of those whose livelihood they took away. This demand that the use of machinery be regulated rests finally on precisely the same grounds as any other kind of regulation. Firstly, to restrain those whose motives are bad from injuring society by their actions, and secondly, to prevent those who with the best of motives do things through ignorance which are harmful in their results.

If such a law could be enacted our victory would be won, for the evidence that only evil follows the unrestricted use of machinery is simply overwhelming, as all who have taken the trouble to inquire are well aware. Facts would be revealed that would set people thinking about the question of regulating machinery, and the

need of setting to work to re−create the traditions of civilization that we have so thoughtlessly allowed to be destroyed. Once attention was turned in this direction a current of thought would be created that would grapple with the realities of the situation, for it would break the spell of that mechanical hypnotism that lures us to our destruction.

The problem of machinery has then a positive and a negative aspect. Its negative aspect is to prevent the further destruction of the traditions of civilization, and its positive is the re−creation of such traditions as the misuse of machinery in the past has destroyed. But when we come to think of things in this way, we begin to see that though machinery has been the more active agent in the destruction of our traditions, yet it is by no means the only agent, and that it would not have been anything like so destructive had it not been introduced into a society whose traditions had already been partly undermined by the subdivision of labour, itself a consequence of the defeat of the Guilds, which defeat handed over industry into the hands of the exploiting capitalist.

Our criticism of the use of machinery has not been directed against machinery as such, but against its unrestricted use and the deliberate ignoring of its social and economic consequences. But with the subdivision of labour which lies behind the misapplication of machinery it is different, since it appears to us to be an entirely indefensible and degrading institution, and as such it should be entirely abolished. To explain what I mean in this connection it will be necessary to differentiate between the division of labour, which is a natural and normal thing, and the subdivision of labour, which is both unnatural and abnormal.

The division of labour is a necessity of any civilized society since, as it is obvious that a man cannot supply all his own needs, the labour of the community must be divided between different occupations. To some extent a man is inevitably dependent on others. Hence it was that no sooner did civilization begin to develop than men tended to become specialized in different trades and occupations. One man became a potter, another a weaver, a third a carpenter, and so forth. Up to this point the division of labour is justified, not merely because it is a necessity of civilization, but because it enlarges the life of the individual and his opportunities for self−expression. In the seventeenth century, however, under the impulse of profit−making, a further development took place. Measures were taken to increase the output and decrease the costs of production by the subdivision of trades into a great number of separate processes. The classical example of the subdivision of labour is that eulogized by Adam Smith in the Wealth of Nations, namely, pin−making, in which industry it takes twenty men to make a pin, each man being specialized for a lifetime upon a single process. Scientific management, about which we hear so much in these days, carries this system to its logical conclusion, and as such it completes the factory process. The subdivision of labour attacks the craft and it reacts upon the man. Scientific management, however, attacks the man direct, its acknowledged aim being to increase output further by the elimination of all motions of the arms, fingers and body that do not contribute directly to the fashioning of the article under process of manufacture.

The subdivision of labour and its recent development into scientific management are the curses of industrial civilization, for by reducing men to the level of automatons, they reduce them to the position of mere fragments of men; they undermine their spiritual, moral and physical life, and disintegrate their personality, while by giving rise to gluts in the market they lead inevitably to sweating and economic insecurity. Together with these evils, they are responsible for a progressive functional atrophy of the aptitudes of man. Dr. Austin Freeman, in a book to which I have already referred, draws attention to the evidence of the degeneracy of the British "sub−man," as he calls the victims of this system. "Compared with the African negro," he says, "the British sub−man is in several respects markedly inferior. He tends to be dull: he is usually quite helpless and unhandy; he has, as a rule, no skill or knowledge of handicraft, or indeed knowledge of any kind. The negro, on the contrary, is usually sprightly and humorous. He is generally well−informed as to the flora and fauna of his region, and nearly always knows the principal constellations. He has some traditional knowledge of religion, myths and folklore, and some acquaintance with music. He is handy and self−helpful; he can usually build a house, thatch a roof, obtain and prepare food, make a fire without matches, spin yarn, and can often weave cotton and make and mend simple implements. Physically he is robust, active, hardy and energetic."

IV. MACHINERY AND ECONOMIC THEORY

THE existing system of society has to−day but few whole−hearted adherents. Those who still defend it are people of the conservative and unimaginative type, who are always prepared to defend an established fact because they lack the imagination to conceive of any other. But with all thinking people the present system is regarded as entirely indefensible. They are, however, divided into two opposed and contradictory schools of thought. Socialists demand the abolition of all private property, apart from personal possessions, while Distributivists, as their name implies, demand a redistribution of property−−their ideal being that of a nation of small property owners.

Now, on first acquaintance these two schools of thought appear to be entirely irreconcilable. Yet both are at bottom conditioned by their attitude towards machinery. The Socialist attitude, as we saw, had its origin in the fact that after 1806 machinery began to displace labour. Owen saw that if society was to remain stable, an increase of production must be accompanied by an increase in consumption. Yet machinery, by reason of the fact that it displaced labour, tended to undermine consumption. It was manifest that the wage system−−the system of distributing purchasing power by means of payment for work done−−was breaking down. What, then, was to become of the working−class under such conditions? If society was to continue on the existing individualistic competitive basis, he concluded, the workers must perish. Hence he demanded the substitution of a communal or co−operative organization of society in place of the competitive one, and this involved the abolition of all private property. We see, therefore, that the Socialist demand for the abolition of private property was necessitated by the need of guarding society against the evils which accompanied the unrestricted use of machinery. It is true that the idea is much older, and is to be traced back to the Medieval Communists, who maintained that the existence of private property was contrary to the teaching of Christ. But the idea made little or no headway until machinery threatened the stability of the old order, and though the motive that led the early Socialists to this conclusion has been lost sight of, yet there can be no doubt that the sense of insecurity that has followed the spread of machine production has led to the widespread acceptance of the idea of abolishing private property.

But it is no easy matter to abolish an institution so deep− rooted as that of private property. It is now a century since the idea was first promulgated, and yet, in spite of the fact that it is widely believed in, and many thinkers have worked out schemes for the transfer of property from private to public ownership, we are as far from its realization as ever. Meanwhile a suspicion gains ground that it is not only impracticable but undesirable. Guild Socialists dealt it a telling blow by attacking the organization of society on a bureaucratic basis which it involved, while Distributivists challenged the idea direct. They maintained that the evil did not reside in the institution of property as such, but in the fact that at the present time the idea of responsibility attaching to property had broken down while so very few people possessed any property at all; that the possession of property guaranteed a man independence; and that it was indispensable to the performance of active function. It must not be abolished, for to do so would be to make every one servile pensioners of the State. This theory, whose principal advocates were Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton, found many supporters, but the difficulty of basing any practical activity upon it was equal to that of the opposed theory of the nationalization of property, for it was evident that it had no relevance to the existing situation apart from the dissolution of industrialism and the restriction of the use of machinery, for it is impossible to solve the problem of industrial capitalism on this basis.

Mr. Tawney

V. MEDIEVAL AND NATIONAL GUILDS

ONCE it is realized that the Medieval Guilds were organizations that existed primarily for the maintenance of economic justice and equity, and that they broke down, not from any defect inherent in their constitution, but because they were never co− extensive with society, we begin to understand that one of the conditions of getting capitalism into subjection is to make Guild organization co−extensive with society. Yet when we suggest this approach, we are told that any such return to an old method of organization is impossible, inasmuch as the old form of Guild organization is not adapted to the circumstances of modern industry with its vast machinery and large organizations, and we are admonished by sundry critics to abandon our project of restoring the Medieval

Guilds, and to work for the establishment of National Guilds, which they tell us are more adapted to the modern conditions.

Now, such advice sounds very plausible, so plausible, in fact, that to most people it must appear as if nothing but sheer personal perversity prevents us from accepting it. Yet this is not the case, since Medieval and National Guilds are not opposed ideas, as is popularly supposed, but complementary ones; while the success of the National Guild Movement in no way excludes or militates against a revival of Guilds of the Medieval type, as will become evident when the position is clearly understood. They are concerned with different things. National Guilds are concerned with the problem of the large modern industry, and it would tend towards the elucidation of the subject if they were called Industrial Guilds rather than National Guilds, which is a misnomer. The advocates of Medieval Guilds, on the contrary, are primarily interested in the crafts, small industries and agriculture, and they are as much concerned to discover how such activities may be restored to their former integrity as they are in bringing them under Guild control. Such being the case, the relative importance which we attach to these two branches of Guild activity depends entirely upon our opinion as to what will be the future of Industrialism. If it is believed, as National Guildsmen did believe, when their theory was first launched, that the future is entirely with the large industry, before whose advance the crafts must eventually disappear, then Medieval Guildsmen will appear as anachronisms. But if, on the contrary, we recognize, as Medieval Guildsmen all along have recognized, and as National Guildsmen have recently come to believe, that our industrial system is a thing altogether abnormal, carrying within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and is even now on the verge of collapse, then the subject begins to wear a different complexion. The Medieval Guildsman will no longer appear as an anachronism, but as a Futurist in the best sense of the word, inasmuch as he is not content to build his house on the sands of the seashore. Such a view of the fate of industrialism in general is not incompatible with the frank recognition of the fact that certain aspects of the system may survive, while, if we do not come to the conclusion that National Guilds have no validity in the future, we at any rate may recognize that in any normal society the area of their activities will be very much circumscribed.

But there is another path of approach. We may approach Medieval Guilds from the point of view of craft organization, or from the point of view of the moral and economic principles that they existed to uphold. If we look at them from the former point of view, their picturesqueness may interest us, though their possible application will appear circumscribed. But if we look at them from the point of view of the moral and economic principles they existed to uphold, we shall come to recognize them as the type and exemplar of all true institutions, inasmuch as they stood for something that has universal validity, and is in no way limited by the details of their organization. From this point of view, the issue between Medieval and National Guilds is not one of drawing a line of demarcation, of defining their respective spheres of influence, nor finally, between the rival claims of centralized and federated or local organization, but between two different conceptions of the purpose of a Guild. Thus the essence of the National Guild idea is the conception of the organization of industry on an entirely self−governing basis, without any admixture of private interests; while the essence of the Medieval Guild idea is that of a court of appeal, whose primary function is that of maintaining a discipline among the members of a particular industry. For remember, the Medieval Guilds did not seek to organize industry, but to control it. They did not seek to supplant the private individual producer by any system of co−operative production. On the contrary, they frankly accepted the principle of the private management of industry, and sought only to superimpose over each industry an organization to regulate it in the same way that professional societies enforce a discipline among their members to−day, with the difference that in addition to upholding a standard of professional conduct the Medieval Guilds were, at their best period, concerned to promote a certain measure of economic equality between their members, in the same way that Trade Unions are to−day. They insisted that all who engaged in any industry should conform to the regulations of the Guild, which fixed prices and rates of wages, regulated apprenticeship and enforced a standard of quality in production, preventing adulteration and bad workmanship, and ordered all other matters appertaining to the conduct of an industry and the personal welfare of its individual members.

Now, what is there to stand in the way of the application of such principles to−day? Though the circumstances of modern industry differ from the circumstances of Medieval industry, yet there is no technical difficulty that stands in the way of the establishment of such control over industry, for the principles to be applied are finally nothing more than the enforcement of moral standards. The only difference between their application under the

Medieval Guilds and under our supposed modern Guilds, which aim at the same purpose, would be that, whereas the former exercised control over employers and workers engaged in small workshops owned by small masters, the latter would exercise control over employers and workers engaged in large and small factories and workshops owned by private individuals, limited liability companies and self−governing groups of workers. To make such control effective, it would be necessary to depart from the rules of the Medieval Guilds to the extent that authority would be vested in the whole body of members−− employers and workers−−instead of being exclusively in the hands of the masters, as was the case in the Middle Ages. For the typical employer to−day is not a master of his craft, who is jealous of its honour, as was the Medieval employer, but a financier, who is only interested in the profit and loss account, and therefore could not be trusted with final authority. This consideration enforces the conclusion that if any standards of honesty and fair dealing are to be upheld, prices fixed, machinery and other matters necessary to the proper conduct of industry to be regulated, the final authority would have to be vested in the trade as a whole, for only those who suffer from the growth of abuses can be relied on to take measures to suppress them.

In support of this contention, that the obstacle in the path of a restoration of Guilds of the Medieval type is moral rather than technical, attention should be directed to the activities of the Industrial Council of the Building Industry,

VI. INDUSTRIALISM AND GUILDS

IN a recent article in the Labour Monthly, nd the abolition of the private ownership of land and capital, and the means of production and exchange. The one was the necessary corollary of the other.

But Socialists and Guildsmen to−day have not that same intellectual grip of the general situation as had their predecessors of Chartist times. Their ideas are not organically related to any central idea. On the contrary, they believe in a number of separate ideas, more or less loosely related, but which are not part of an organic whole. In the Report on Fabian Policy, the abolition of the Wage System is rejected as an impracticable proposal, which in the sense in which it was understood by the Chartists is perfectly true. It is impracticable. But apparently Fabians had no suspicion whatsoever that the idea was logically related to the problem of machinery, which was the reason for the Chartist advocacy of the doctrine (equally impracticable) of the abolition of private property in land, capital, and the means of production and exchange, which doctrine the Fabians retained, in sublime unconsciousness of its origin, basing their propaganda on an accessory idea, and rejecting the proposal which gave it at least a logical validity. Guildsmen, like the Fabians, were so completely unaware that there was any connection between the Chartist demand for the abolition of the Wage System and the problem of machinery, that when they revived the phrase they came to interpret it as meaning the regularization, stabilization and moralization of the wage relationship, entirely unaware of the fact that such a policy is impossible so long as the unrestricted use of machinery is permitted. But when truth is turned out of the front door, it has a way of coming in at the back, and the incompatibility of the wage relationship with the prevailing system of industry, which the early Socialists rightly connected with the unrestricted use of machinery, has in these latter days come to be connected with the problem of credit, and in connection with the Douglas−New Age Scheme, the demand is made for "dividends for all" on the assumption that the dividend is to be considered the successor of the wage.

Now this idea is sufficiently plausible to gain converts among people who do not see clearly what such a suggestion involves. Such people object to the idea of wages for several reasons. In the first place, because the receiving of wages seems to imply a servile status; in the next because on the wage basis, artists and poets, scholars and others who do not do work that is of immediate economic value get left out in the cold; and lastly, because the distribution of purchasing power on the basis of payment for work done does not suggest to many minds a sense of the corporate responsibility of society for the welfare of its individual members.

Now when we come to examine these objections we find they are based upon a confusion of thought. Wages, it is true, are apt nowadays to connote a servile condition, but this is not because a system of payment for work done necessarily involves any degradation, but because under modern conditions it so happens that most people who do any useful work are in a servile condition. Under the Medieval Guild system, the journeymen and apprentices received what were, technically speaking, wages; but we do not associate such payments as they

received with the evils of the Wage System because, though wages existed under the Guilds, they did not imply the brutal and inhuman relationship which wages do to−day, for labour was not then a commodity, the price of which was determined by the competition of the markets, but was paid for at a fixed rate determined by the Guilds, of which both masters and men were alike members. Moreover, the journeyman only remained a wage−earner during the earlier part of his life. He could look forward to a day when, as a matter of course, he would set up in business on his own account, for as there was a limit placed to the number of assistants any master could employ, opportunities for advancement were open to all who desired to use them. The Wage System therefore did not in those days present itself as an evil in the way it does to−day. On the contrary, it is the growth of large organizations, on a basis of the subdivision of labour and the unrestricted use of machinery, that has created the evils which we associate with the Wage System to−day; for under such conditions, those personal relationships which humanize life tend to disappear, and their place is taken by a cash−nexus divorced from all sentiment and personal regard. It is such conditions that make the Wage System to−day so brutal, but if the use of machinery were restricted and the subdivision of labour abolished as we demand, that disturbing element which makes wages at once so uncertain, brutal and servile would be removed.

The Medieval Guilds accepted payment for work done as being the normal thing in society, but that did not preclude them from giving aid to the sick and unfortunate or of treating exceptional circumstances in exceptional ways. But owing to the fact that under industrialism all the normal human relationships have become degraded, people are always seeking to make the exception into the rule. Thus because under our existing economic system work that is of no immediate economic value cannot command proper remuneration, they repudiate the normal thing that payment should be for work done, in order that some provision shall be made for the exceptional. But surely this is irrational, for there is no reason why a system of payment should be uniform. It was in the past frankly recognized that certain kinds of activities depended upon patronage, and this should be recognized to−day. But again there is the same prejudice against patronage as against wages, because like all right and human things, it lends itself to abuse. The Church and Guilds in the Middle Ages were the patrons of learning and the arts, and if restored they would become such again in the future. It is because of the decline of the one and the disappearance of the other that learning and the arts are in such difficulties, but it is vain to suppose that people can ever be led to make the exception into the rule. For if they have not sufficient interest in these things as to be willing to act as their patrons, there is no prospect whatsoever that they could be induced to turn the economic system upside down in order that such exceptional activities may be provided for.

And the instinct of the people would be right, for if payment in the future is not to be on a basis of work done, then we must have industrial conscription, for how otherwise is the necessary work of the community to get done? And I don't see how the artist or poet is going to fare advantageously under such conditions. The Church and Guilds might be persuaded to discriminate in their favour, but I cannot see it happening under a national system of industrial conscription.

Further, it is necessary to consider how such a proposition as "dividends for all" would in practice be applied. Reformers may have visions of a wonderful system of industry under which all existing evils would be abolished and each individual have complete and absolute liberty, but in practice the popularization of such an idea could have no other effect than to create a popular vested interest in the maintenance of the existing system of industry with all its abuses. For you cannot abolish the Black Country and draw dividends on it, since the two ideas are mutually exclusive.

But is there anything practical at all in this proposal of "dividends for all?" It is obvious that it can only be theoretically justified on the assumption that the present system has within itself the elements of permanence and stability. If the wage system were the only thing that was breaking down, then the plea that purchasing power must in the future be distributed by means of dividends rather than wages would at any rate be plausible. But the fact is that simultaneously with the breakdown of the wage system, there is going on the breakdown of every other institution in modern society. Politics, religion, art, industry, technical skill, the institution of the family, and all other social traditions are in a state of disintegration. As it is apparent that all these problems are organically related to each other, it is evidently impossible to effect change or reform in any one of them apart from dealing with the problem of machinery that lies behind them all. Thus, to go no further, "dividends for all" is only possible on the assumption that our financial and industrial system can be preserved.

This brings me to the central idea of the Douglas−New Age Scheme which we must now proceed to consider.

Mr. Douglas sees, as most people who think do, that the deadlock that has overtaken industry is no ordinary trade depression that will gradually disappear before the normal operations of demand and supply as previous depressions have done. On the contrary, he maintains that the present situation is the logical outcome of the pursuit of the policy of Maximum Production on a basis of bank credit. Our system of credit, he says, upsets the balance between supply and demand by reason of the fact that whereas credits are given for increasing production, they are not given for increasing consumption. That Mr. Douglas has put his finger on the immediate cause of the present deadlock, apart from the economic confusion resulting from the war and the stupidities of the Peace Treaty, is not, I think, to be denied. There can be no doubt that the wholesale issue of credit by the banks to individuals, on the basis of "to him that hath shall be given" is the immediate cause of the present financial deadlock, for it is impossible in the long run to offer facilities for the increase of production without giving corresponding opportunities for the increase of consumption, without upsetting the balance between demand and supply. But while we may agree that the wholesale issue of credit is the immediate cause of the deadlock, it is clearly not the ultimate cause, as we shall find out later. But meanwhile Mr. Douglas proposes to correct this discrepancy between demand and supply by selling goods below cost, the selling price of any commodity bearing the same ratio to its actual cost as the total National Consumption of all descriptions of commodities does to the National Production of Credit, while the Government is called upon to reimburse to the producers of any commodity the difference between their total cost incurred and their total price received by means of treasury notes, such notes being debited, as now, to the National Credit Account.

Now the first and most obvious objection to this Scheme is that such a wholesale issue of paper money would depreciate the currency. But Douglasites are unwilling to admit this. They urge that the fixation of prices which finds a place in the Scheme would be a sufficient safeguard against this. And when we object that to make such a measure effective it would be necessary to fix prices simultaneously in all industries, since if the Scheme were applied gradually and prices fixed below cost in one industry and not in the others, the prices of commodities that were unfixed would rise to restore the balance, they reply that the rise of prices in non−regulated industries would rapidly force on the application of the scheme to other industries. But it won't do. All economic theories based upon the theory of enlightened selfishness promise such results. The adoption of Free Trade by this country, it used to be argued, would force its adoption on other countries, while the theory of unfettered individualism was justified on the grounds that while as producer the individual might suffer, he would nevertheless benefit by the cheapening of all he had to buy. But somehow or other all prophecies based upon theories of enlightened selfishness produce results the very contrary of what was intended. And this theory would certainly be no exception to the rule, for in these days of international markets the unit to be considered is not this country but the world. Under such circumstances the proposition is unthinkable. Those who believe in it only find it thinkable because they love to live in a world of abstractions divorced from reality. The only remedy for such mental states is to translate economic abstractions into concrete terms and to think always in the terms of actual wealth−−of bread, clothes, buildings, ships, fuel, furniture, etc. Tested in this way, such abstractions as production and consumption will appear as the most ambiguous of categories that conceal essential differences. Thus they will include everything from food to armaments, things that support life and things that destroy it, and yet we are asked to believe that the economic balance of production can at any time be restored by selling goods below cost. But what if there are things which people do not want at any price−−armaments for instance? How would selling below cost help the situation? The whole thing is absurd; it is an illusion that owes its origin to a fatal habit of divorcing the problem of money from the problem of things. It is the reductio ad absurdum of our financial system.

I said that the problem of credit might, apart from the economic consequences of the War and the Peace, be regarded as the immediate cause of the present deadlock, but that it was not the ultimate cause. In support of this contention I would draw attention to the fact that the present deadlock was foreseen by Marx. It finds a place in the Communist Manifesto (1847). And yet, though Marx foresaw this deadlock, there is not in the whole of his writings anything about the problems of credit and high finance (which is not surprising, for the problem is largely the creation of the Limited Liability Companies Act of 1862). On the contrary, he foresaw it as the logical outcome of the investment and reinvestment of surplus wealth for further increase (theory of surplus value). If, therefore, Marx foresaw this deadlock seventy−five years ago, long before this problem of credit had made its appearance, does it not prove that the problem is much more fundamental than the problem of credit? Nay, does

not the problem of credit begin to appear as an effect, as a symptom of the disease rather than its cause, and will it not therefore be necessary to dig deeper than Mr. Douglas has done if a solution is to be found?

But while Marx saw that the investment and reinvestment of surplus wealth for further increase would in the long run produce an economic deadlock, he did not regard this practice as the ultimate cause, for he saw that behind the problem of finance was the problem of machinery. He saw that the capitalists were not masters of their own house, inasmuch as they were at the mercy of their machines. The progress of invention was driving capitalism along the road it was travelling, and would in the end spell its destruction. So far I can go with him. But beyond this point we part company, for there was something he did not see. He did not see that the process of industrial development that he traced was not only destructive of capitalism, but of the very fabric of society, while in the long run the unrestricted use of machinery and capitalist development would bring into existence a civilization so complex that the human mind would be unable to comprehend all its multitudinous interconnections. And because of this, because modern civilization makes demands on our alertness and many−sidedness with which our wits and sympathies cannot cope, it tends to degenerate into anarchy. This consideration, apart from any other, should be sufficient to convince us that there is no solution of our problems apart from a return to simpler conditions of life, such as would reduce the complexity of our relationships to terms commensurate with the human understanding.

Looking at the problem from this point of view, our industrial system no longer appears as the foundation upon which a more highly developed civilization can be superimposed, but as a blind alley, from which we must retrace our steps or perish. But how may this be done? This is the sphinx riddle that confronts us, and it is by no means easy to answer. Perhaps it cannot be answered completely by any individual. But of this much we can be certain; that any change in the direction of our activities must be preceded by a change in the heart and mind of the people. That such a change is actually taking place I think is undoubted. But it has not yet proceeded sufficiently far to become practical. The popular mind is thoroughly disillusionized over the idea of progress, but it is still largely under the spell of machinery, and not until that spell is broken will our minds be sufficiently liberated to think and act clearly. The first step, therefore, is to break this spell by means of propaganda. If we could do this, we should be able to see clearer, for the popularization and acceptance of an idea will, if there is any truth in it, tend to create the circumstances necessary to its transformation into the terms of practical politics.

It is a philosophical truth that no synthesis is ever complete, since in every synthesis there is always something left over that becomes the starting−point of the next synthesis. To translate this idea into the terms of the social problem, we may say that the army of unemployed is the something left over from the industrial synthesis, and therefore in our efforts to reconstruct society we must begin with it. Marx recognized this, and he proposed to use them for the purpose of overthrowing the capitalist system by a proletarian revolution. But recognizing, as we do, that our industrial system is in a state of disintegration, the problem that presents itself to us is not how the industrial and capitalist system can be captured or overthrown, but how a new civilization can be built out of its ruins, and therefore we shall attempt to deal with the unemployed as individual men rather than in the mass. Accepting the position that our industrial system is doomed, we should set to work to turn them into agriculturists and handicraftsmen. There should be no more difficulty about this, if it were undertaken in a public way, than there was about turning civilians into soldiers during the war. It is entirely a question of will and determination. Hitherto our efforts to do anything with the unemployed have been the last word in futility, but that is because the only idea behind the various schemes for dealing with them has been to make work, to mark time, as it were, until trade revived. Such an aim inspires nobody. The unemployed themselves are conscious of the futility of the work on which they are employed, and this sense of futility is demoralizing in the last degree. But if the fact that our industrial system is doomed was frankly faced, and men were given a craft or agricultural training to enable them to take their place in the new social order, their work would come to have meaning for them, and this would make all the difference in the world, for men can only do their best when they are dominated by a real motive.

By such means a new society could be built within the existing one, and as our industrial civilization falls to pieces, this new society would gradually take its place. There should be no difficulty about this, if the principle were frankly recognized that at every stage in its development the new society should be protected. The foundations of such a new society would rest, as all stable societies rest, upon agriculture, and to effect such a revival as we anticipate, agriculture would need to be protected from any foreign competition, and prices and wages would have to be fixed. There would, moreover, have to be a complete overhauling of our land system, the

reform of which, it is to be presumed, will become practical politics as the situation tends to become desperate. Upon this base of agriculture the new industries in which the subdivision of labour was abolished and machinery controlled would rest. Such industries would need, in the first instance, to be protected against the competition of industries in which the existing abuses were retained, which could be done by putting a tax upon machinery and the subdivision of labour. After a time, as this new society began to develop an organized life of its own, it would no longer stand in need of protection from outside industries, for the saving of cost that would be effected by the elimination of cross−distribution and of overhead charges would more than compensate for the increased cost of its production. Still, prices and wages should remain fixed, and every industry be under the regulation of Guilds to prevent capitalism growing up again within the new society, which it certainly would if freedom of bargaining were permitted. There would be no practical difficulty about reconstruction upon such lines, once the idea was popularly understood. It is impossible to graft the principles we stand for on to modern society if taken separately. But handled together, as part of a large and comprehensive scheme, and nursed in the early stages, there is no reason why they should not be acted upon. We may not be able to return to simpler conditions of society individually, but there is no reason why we should not do so collectively.

Meanwhile external conditions are co−operating to force upon us an agricultural policy. The conclusion becomes irresistible that the days of our industrial supremacy are over. It was an accidental and temporary and not a permanent circumstance that gave colour to the theory, so popular in the first half of the last century, that we were destined to become the workshop of the world. This economic myth owed its origin to the fact that this country was the first to embark upon an industrial career in the modern sense. We had certain natural advantages, an abundance of mineral wealth, and an unrivalled geographical position, which naturally constituted us a centre for trade and commerce, while securing us from the fear of invasion. But the great fact, compared with which all others pale into insignificance, was that we were the first to use steam−power and machinery. It was this fact that enabled our goods to penetrate into every part of our world, which built up huge credits in every country abroad, and led to the enormous expansion of our mercantile marine, while constituting us the merchants and bankers of the world.

But it is apparent that this virtual monopoly could not last indefinitely. It could last no longer than we retained our monopoly of machinery, since, other things being equal, it would always be cheaper to produce goods near the markets and where raw material is found than at a distance from them, and therefore it has happened that one by one other nations adopted machine production and our monopoly came to be challenged. Before the war we were holding our own with difficulty. Lancashire was losing her cotton markets, because of the competition of America, India, Japan and Brazil. Australia had begun to produce her own woollen goods, while in many markets, for all kinds of goods, we suffered from the competition of Germany, Japan and America. But it was the war that completed the change for us by transforming the world conditions. It shattered the fabric of our commerce, industry and finance. Deprived of their accustomed supplies from us, many of our former customers were driven to begin producing all kinds of things for themselves, and as these new manufactures are carried on near to where the raw materials are found or produced, it is manifest that these markets must gradually slip from our hands. We cannot hope in the future to export such large quantities of manufactured goods to Australia, Canada, South America and elsewhere as hitherto, while the tendency is for other nations to carry their own goods in their own ships. Meanwhile, in order to finance the war, we were compelled to dispose of most of our foreign investments. Thus, in one way or other, there is not the money coming into this country that there was before the war, and our industries will not be able to provide work for such numbers as hitherto. Not being able to sell goods to the food−producing nations, we shall soon be without the money to pay for the food we must import to keep our population alive−−a fact that is brought home to us by the constant falling of the rate of exchange with food−producing nations.

That is the immediate practical problem that confronts us to−day. If anything could demonstrate the folly of a nation allowing itself to become dependent upon other nations for its supply of food, and building up national industries which were dependent upon foreign supplies of raw material, the situation in which we find ourselves to−day should do so. We have allowed ourselves to drift into an impossible situation, and things must steadily go from bad to worse until agriculture is revived, for as the countries upon which we have been accustomed to rely for a supply of food are beginning to produce their own industrial wares, it follows that our exports to them will tend to become a steadily diminishing quantity, and therefore the only way to meet the situation is for us to take

measures to produce as much food as possible for ourselves by the revival of agriculture.

Whether or not sufficient food can be produced in these islands to satisfy our requirements is a debatable question. But supposing it cannot, then it follows that if our foreign trade shrinks to the point at which we cannot sell sufficient goods to food−producing nations to buy the food required to support our surplus population, there can be no remedy apart from emigration, for no tinkering with the machinery of distribution can distribute more food than we can grow and import.

VII. DEMOCRACY AND ORGANIZATION

ONE immediate practical difficulty that stands in the way of the reorganization of society on a corporate and democratic basis is the tendency of modern collective activity to be choked by a multiplicity of committees. It matters not what the nature of the activity may be; whether it be cultural or political, official or unofficial, democratic or otherwise, the same fate overtakes all people at the present day whenever they attempt to act together, and this in spite of the fact that the evil is almost everywhere recognized.

If we reflect on this phenomenon, there are only two deductions to be made from it. One of these is that democracy is an impossible ideal; the other is that our conception of democracy is a false one. The latter I believe to be the true explanation. Society was more democratic in the Middle Ages than it has been at any time since civilization began. Until the thirteenth century the law was supreme. The King was just as much subject to it as any of his subjects, for "he did not make laws by his own authority, but required the consent and advice of his wise men, and in some more or less vague sense of the whole nation." difficulties of democracy, but it is a difficulty that has been enormously exaggerated since industrialism came along by the abnormal growth of towns. In Unforeseen Tendencies of Democracy, Mr. E. L. Godkin shows how the decline of the ideals of American democracy coincided with the growth of large towns and the increase of the electorate. In the early days of the American Republic, when voters were few, men of wisdom and character, he says, were personally known to the communities in which they lived, and they became the public representatives because of their prominence. But with the rapid increase of emigration, the members of society ceased to be well known to each other, and then the trouble began. A capacity for public speaking, rather than personal character, became the primary qualification for public life, because only good speakers could make themselves known to the electorates. With this change there came a deterioration in the type of the public representative, and following this decline, there came the growth of the power of the political machine which could automatically produce majorities in favour of any candidate it chose to support. There followed political corruption and jobbery, and the defeat of everything that the ideal of democracy exists to promote.

Rousseau himself was not blind to such dangers, for, though at times he talks as if democracy could do no wrong, at other times he recognized there are dangers, while it is to be presumed that his advocacy of small states and small property was not unconnected with his apprehension of danger in large ones. Truth to tell, Rousseau qualified his position in so many ways, that it is finally difficult to convict him of anything except the more general charge that he had an over−confidence in the results that would follow a mere change of social machinery; though, even here, it is possible to quote passages from his writings against such an assumption. Of course, social machinery we must have; and there are evils that can be checked by the provision of suitable social machinery. Yet they are secondary ones. For no social machinery can finally ensure the desideratum of Rousseau, that the wise will come to the top; for the simple reason that a precedent condition is that the few and the many shall share a common spiritual and cultural tradition, since, in the absence of such a common tradition, the wise cannot be known to the people, for no common bond of sympathy and understanding exists between them. But it is just this common and shared tradition which in the past operated as a cement to bind different types and classes of people together that is absent from the modern world. It existed in the Middle Ages, where king and peasant, priest and craftsman, were bound together by a common religious tradition which, however much they might disagree, was stronger than their differences. But, since the Renaissance, it has gradually disappeared. This has come about as the result of a variety of causes, legal, æsthetic, scientific and literary, which have combined to separate the logical or intellectual part of man from the emotional and instinctive, and to give it a locus standi of its own, and has resulted in creating a gulf between cultured and uncultured people such as never existed in the

past. As a consequence, the wise are no longer understood of the people, and they tend to drift apart because they do not readily discover points of contact. In this light the problem of democracy is seen to be dependent upon our capacity to recreate a culture in which every member of the community can share. For "Men cannot unite immediately among one another; they unite in things, in common values, in the pursuit of common ends."

VIII. THE RETURN TO THE PAST

ONE of the consequences of giving to spiritual values the foremost place is that we inevitably put the past before the present, because the great traditions of culture come from the past. Hence it has been that all great movements of human origin in history−−good and bad−−have had their beginning in a study of the past. All the movements in the Middle Ages began with a desire to recover the culture and art of the Pagan world. The activities of the Schoolmen and the lawyers had their origin in such an attempt. Gothic architecture likewise had its origin in an attempt to revive the old Roman architecture, the ruins of which covered the Empire. The Renaissance merely continued the same tradition of looking back. But what made the Renaissance so deadly was not the fact that it looked back, but the things it looked back for. The Medieval schoolmen looked back to recover lost truths to enable them to bring light and understanding to men. But the men of the Renaissance were prompted by a different motive. There were elements of pride and egotism associated with their desire to revive antiquity. The motive that inspired their passion for learning was not a communal but an individualist one. It was not the salvation of society, but the development of the individual. It was less the substance of Pagan thought than the language or style, the way a thing was said, that interested them. It was a movement of externals, and so it degenerated into pedantry. It became destructive. But this failure does not prove the futility of revivals. What it does prove is the insufficiency of the motives that prompted the men of the Renaissance. It will at all times be necessary to look back if we are anxious to see life in its proper perspective, for in the development of civilization the basic and fundamental things have a way of getting overlaid, obscured and forgotten, and it is only by searching in history that they may be recovered.

Fortunately in our day the truth of this principle−−that the future may only be discovered in the past−−has been strikingly demonstrated by the success that has attended the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland. To the average Englishman Sinn Fein is nothing more than a rebellion like the Fenian rebellion against the overlordship of England. Yet it is only necessary to have a slight acquaintance with the movement to know it is more than this, since if such had been the case it would in all probability have ended in much the same way, degenerating into a secret physical force movement ending in another Fenian fiasco. If Ireland was saved from repeating this experience, it was because Sinn Fein dug deep down into the depths of human nature, because along with its political and revolutionary activities, it maintained other overt activities that kept the people together. The foundations of the movement were laid by the Gaelic League which, established in 1893, came with intellectual illumination to safeguard the practical progress that was being made towards putting the Irish farmer on his feet by the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, the Congested Districts Board, and the Department of Agriculture from degenerating into materialism. Its activities were consequent upon the labours of Dr. Douglas Hyde. "If," says Mr. de Blacam, "Ireland to−day is not the Ireland of Carleton, Lover and Lever−−the stage Ireland of drunkenness and brawling, ignorance and snobbery−−but the Ireland of the Gaelic tradition, heroic, imaginative, daring−−Dr. Hyde's scholarly labours are the source of the change. His Literary History of Ireland, a gigantic, ill−proportioned book, overflowing, gossiping, absorbing volume, suggesting the rapid talk of an enthusiast, bubbling over with more news than he can tell of great discoveries−−this was the book that revealed a wealth of cultural possessions that nine hundred and ninety−nine Irishmen were as ignorant of as they were of the writings of Krasinski and Mickiewicz. It threw a new light on Irish history, under which the figures and places of the past seemed to take on a bright and splendid life. His pen was like a wand that turned Ireland from a hovel to a palace of faëry grandeur in her sons' eyes. The Gaelic tongue, subtle, musical, elaborate, yet regarded with a slave's shame since Dan O'Connell decried it, became now a fountain of intellectual life; and Anglo−Irish literature, catching the reflected light of Gaelic inspiration, shone with the names of Yeats, Synge, Gregory, Colum, O'Grady, Russell, Milligan. . . . A national drama rose; and Dublin, putting off its down−at−heels gentility, became an artistic centre, and an absorbingly interesting place to live in. So vigorous was the new cultural

movement that men of the aristocrat caste or Protestant creed, men who formerly regarded Ireland as a place best out of, men who in earlier years became Bernard Shaws, now found in Ireland their most appreciative audience.

"The early passion of the Gaelic revival was almost apostolic, religious, accompanied by signs and wonders, and none of us will ever forget his first Feis, marching through the green hills to the skirl of the pipes, or singing the memory− haunted Gaelic songs at the mossy shrines of heroes. Though it was scarce suspected then, we can now all see implicit in those early functions the developments that have since come to pass, and Sinn Fein, Republicanism, and Social Gaelicism were inevitable out−flowerings of the seed then sown. All we knew then was that our feet were upon a mounting road with something splendid, though still cloud−shrouded, as the goal."