IN all ages and in every land a certain class of irresponsible politicians have posed as the friends of the people and denounced the dominant classes as ruthless pillagers of the poor. Nostrum after nostrum has been concocted by them, each warranted to cure every ill that Society is heir to. But after swallowing numberless revolutionary purges, followed by military phlebotomy and supplemented by constitutional alternatives, our chronic ailments have always re-asserted themselves, and today, as of old, toil and privation are the portion of the many, while idleness and luxury are the privileges of the few.

To say that this result is either satisfactory or creditable to us would be an outrage on our deepest convictions. We know that he who works should be able to eat, and that if any lack bread it should be those elegant inutilities who now feast upon the fat of the land.

But while it is very easy to dream of an ideal state, it is very hard to create one. That which we now have is what an effective majority has instituted. It has been evolved in accordance with our social exigencies, and suddenly to uproot it would be nothing less than a national disaster in which the poor and weak would again be the first to suffer. It is therefore a very grave question that we have to consider, and we shall do well to approach it in a calm and candid spirit.

Probably we shall be all agreed that every one who is born into a community has a right to live in that community, provided that there are sufficient of the necessaries of life, and that he duly performs the duties which society imposes upon him conjointly with his fellow citizens.

Unfortunately a good deal of mischief is often done by magnifying this right, while the duty is practically ignored. It is a great mistake also to suppose that selfishness is an aristocratic peculiarity. We all want to do as little work as possible, and each is eager to pocket the last penny that he can extort as payment for his services, while these services are always magnified by his imagination.

"Eight hours work, eight hours play,  
Eight hours sleep and eight shillings a day",  

was long the artisan's Shibboleth; but supposing that this were granted, does anyone imagine it would be a final settlement? Nay, even if it were so amended that four hours' work would earn sixteen shillings pay, would [Page 4] that extinguish the desire to have "plenty of money and nothing to do", which is the
The ultimate idea of happiness with most of us?

Possibly, too, some very liberal-minded patriot may demand what right has society to impose labour upon any one, and should he assert that if a man is obliged to work it matters little to him whether his master is the State or a Capitalist, it really would be very difficult to refute his contention.

The first point, then, that presents itself to us is, What are the personal rights that we hear so much about? It is perfectly true that in his primitive state man has an unconditioned right to all the products of Nature, and his appropriation of them is limited only by his power and his will. But we are not living in a primitive state, and his unconditioned rights cease to exist, directly a man becomes a member of a community. The common good and the collective will impose restrictions on individual desire, and the right of one is dominated by the right of all. While any person who objects to these restrictions is free to quit the community, it is puerile to complain of them. There are plenty of unoccupied lands where he can be free from all laws but his own will; where what his toil can win will be absolutely his, and where none will gainsay his pleasure. But if he expects to have social advantages without any personal sacrifice, he is demanding aristocratic privileges, and though he may slave in a fustian jacket, he only lacks power and opportunity to show that essentially he is at one with our oppressors.

Now it is the bastard Socialism founded on an assertion of spurious personal rights that Theosophy rejects as a snare and a delusion. As H.P.B. once said to me, "If they attempt to establish it the end can only be bloodshed and ruin."

Then the notion that an increase of money wage is necessarily of permanent advantage to the worker, is also an illusion that we should do well to get rid of. Where one class of workmen obtains increased pay, for a time they profit by it at the expense of their fellow citizens; but directly all workmen have obtained a proportionate rise, the advantage is lost in the enhanced price of all articles in which the money earned has to be expended.

Thorold Rogers tells us [Work and Wages, 388] that "up to 1540 the wages of artisans and mechanics averaged 3s a week, those of agricultural labourers 2s except in harvest time, when they had 3s. In 1495 the price of wheat was 4s 0½d of Malt 2s 4Ωd., Oats 1s, 7Ωd, and Oatmeal 5s.4d. a quarter. So an artisan could provision his house for a twelvemonth with three quarters of Wheat, three of Malt and two of Oatmeal by working for ten weeks, while an agricultural labourer could do the same in fifteen weeks. [Page 5]

In 1651 an artisan on an average could earn 7s 9d, to 8s.6d a week! an ordinary workman 6s. 9d., and in harvest time 9s, to 11s. But wheat was 51s, 4d, malt 22s.7d., oatmeal 48s, to 64s, so the cost of his year's provisions was £16 13s. 9d, while the work of 52 weeks only produced £20 3s. Consequently an artisan had to work about 42 weeks to earn as much as his predecessor with smaller wages could earn by ten weeks' labour." Of course this was partly owing to the confiscation of the People's right to the land, and things have been much amended since 1651, but the same principle still prevails and produces like results, so I do not think it is by an increase of the wage rate that we can hope permanently to improve the condition of the worker. To what then should we look? Evidently to free labour; but then, how are we to emancipate our workers?
In a lecture delivered before the Fabian Society, and published by it, Mr. Sidney Webb tells us that "Socialism is not an elaborate plan of society, but a principle of social action".

This principle, as explained by him, may be epitomised as "universal benevolence", and is one in which Theosophists heartily concur; nay more, they supply a most serious omission of the Socialist by detailing the only plan by which there seems any likelihood of this principle ever becoming the motive of our social activities, for as Mr. Webb afterwards tells us that the moment will never come when we can say, "Now Socialism is established", apparently all that he and the Fabian Society ask of us is to make the "unattainable" our definite object and to progress eternally in subjective altruism. Now though universal benevolence may be accepted as the highest ideal of a Social State, an abstract anticipation of it is hardly likely to commend itself to those who, not unnaturally, seek for a speedy amendment of their present social condition.

This Fabian proposal, therefore, has not sufficient backbone for a working policy, however beautiful it may be as a philosophical aspiration.

Of this Mr. Webb seems semi-conscious, for later on he would have Government "insist on the ethical right of joint workers, and workers alone, to the whole produce of their labour without any deduction for rent and interest or any other form of monopolist's toll".

He further tells us that "all forms of Socialism are agreed in repudiating any claim by particular workers to the competitive exchange value of their particular products".

Socialistic universal benevolence then, when reduced to practice, consists in the Government confiscating all which is possessed by the Haves and bestowing it upon the Have-not's. As it is not even suggested that these favoured ones are to do anything to earn the money, beyond giving themselves the trouble of receiving it, it is really very difficult for a person of average perception to discover what would be the essential difference between the proposed recipients and the scoundrels who have accepted the property that was bequeathed to them in the ordinary and legal manner.

As a supplement to his proposal Mr. Webb very graciously consents that the disappropriated capitalists shall receive payment in full for their estates. But as he forgets to tell us where the money is to come from, or who is to provide it, we are obliged to infer that he relegates that duty to the Man in the Moon or to some other still more ethereal benefactor.

Supposing, however, that we declared the private ownership of property illegal, and dealt with past accumulations in this summary manner: what about future aggregations ? Is thrift hereafter to be regarded as a crime ? Are the unexpended profits of a man's own industry to be confiscated by the State ? This is only a logical sequence of the initial proceeding and, if consistent, the advocates of the one must plead also for the other.

But even if we decide on this step, how are we to accomplish it ? Any tangible wealth, of course, could be
"requisitioned", but skill and knowledge would be very difficult to deal with. How are we to make an artisan work satisfactorily when, of all that he earns, he is allowed to enjoy only so much as a State Official apportions to him? And how are we to get at the knowledge which its possessor refuses to impart to us either gratuitously or at our valuation. And yet the skill of the artisan and the knowledge of the adept must control labour or but little wealth can be created by it. On the other hand, if we admit the private ownership of these means of production we can only make an arbitrary distinction between them and their products accumulated by thrift and invested in labour-saving machinery, consequently one way or the other such Socialistic propositions fail us in their application.

It is quite true that thrift, like every other virtue, has its dark side and becomes a vice when carried to excess: for "the love of money is the root of all evil"; but because some of our blinder brothers fall into this snare are Theosophists, whose eyes are open to the vanity of all transient toys, to repudiate the wise economy which prevents a worker becoming a tax on the community when his work-force is no longer efficient. Or are we to term a man an evil doer because he denies himself present gratification in order that he may accumulate the means that will henceforth render him more helpful to the poor and the distressed. It would be a sad day for any land when such sentiments prevailed, and Socialist spendthrifts will be a long time before they persuade the wise to adopt a policy that precedes universal destitution.

Another of Mr. Webb's contentions is that private ownership must be altered so as to leave the great means of wealth production, land and industrial capital, under the full control of the community. And in the Trades Union Congress of September, 1893, a resolution was carried by 137 votes to 97, that all labour members receiving financial assistance from the Trades Union Congress must in future pledge themselves to support the principle of collective ownership and control of all the means of production and distribution. We may therefore fairly take this to be the Socialist programme.

Now land and industrial capital cannot properly be classed together. Land is a product of Nature which, like air and light, is the birthright of everyone. Capital is the unexpended product of labour, and properly belongs to those whose self-denial has accumulated it; consequently unless we wish to impose a penalty on thrift and to institute a terrestrial lubber-land in which the idle and improvident shall luxuriate in laziness till our means are utterly exhausted, we cannot deny the right of individuals to possess capital, even if they do use it as an aid to industry.

Therefore, to ignore the radical distinction between land and capital would be a fundamental error, fatal to prosperity and ruinous to happiness. This proposition is easily demonstrated, for if any of us crossed the seas to seek for a new home we should find plenty of ready-made land but not a single ready-made steam engine, because the one is provided by Nature and the other must be created by man.

What legislation might do is this: —

1. Abolish all laws which artificially perpetuate the wealth of classes.
2. Remove the burden of taxation from labour and impose it on wealth.
3. Restore to every Briton the right of access to the natural opportunities for exercising his industry; in other words, nationalise the land.
4. Facilitate workers acquiring either individually or collectively the ownership of all aids to labour that they require in their respective industries.

Beyond this what right has anyone to ask the intervention of Government? A worker who requires aid, whether it be that of a spade, a hammer or a steam engine, owes the maker or owner an equivalent for the advantage he has obtained by the use of an implement which he, the user, has not created. To demand this use without rendering the equivalent is arbitrary dishonesty, worthy only of an aristocrat.

Much, then, as we deplore the evils resulting from the deformities of our civilisation, strongly as we denounce the class edicts which favour and perpetuate the monopoly of wealth, and deeply as we deplore the ruthless avarice of strong oppressors, a calm consideration of the subject forces upon us the conviction that it is only by individual intelligence, manliness and thrift that workers as a whole can attain a higher social standing. [Page 8]

It is because Theosophy is the best incentive to these virtues that I hold it to be the true basis of true Socialism.

We read in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II., p. 246, that “The Kumaras refused to create because they wished man to become his own creator”. They did not want him to be a mere animal, content with physical gratification, but willed that he should be an immortal god " whose joy was the happiness of all and whose life was self-sacrifice for the good of others. If we could imbue each human soul with this spirit how speedily we should attain the universal benevolence which Mr. Webb and his colleagues vainly seek to manufacture by Acts of Parliament, and to obtain which they court the emasculation of paternal Government.

They would make Socialism compulsory, Theosophists hold that it must be voluntary, the natural outcome of individual altruism; they therefore seek by all means to render all men altruistic, for Socialism as well as thrift has its dark side, and if selfishness carry it to an excess it will be a curse instead of a blessing.

"Son of a bondman, know
Who would be free, himself must strike
The foremost blow"

said Lord Byron. And in this case that blow must be struck, not at external oppressors, but at the innate apathy and self-seeking which prevents men realising their divine possibilities.

Why, if workers would only combine to do their duty instead of whining about their rights, real or imaginary, in a very few years capitalists, as a class, could be extinguished, and the means of production would be the property of the producers.

With self-denial and resolution every Socialist dream can be realised without any alteration in the law,
except in the case of land. It is well-known that wilful waste of time and material enhance the average cost of production by at least ten per cent. Were men working on their own account and if they avoided this loss, those who hired labour must speedily be driven out of the field, while every worker would be ensured the full social value of his own industry and would live as a free man.

But to accomplish this every one must be willing to do his appointed part in the effective carrying out of a definite and intelligent plan. He must overcome the temptation of taking holidays at inconvenient times, avoid such indulgences as impair his work force, and seek to make his production as large and as perfect as possible.

If losses are incurred through errors of judgment or unforeseen circumstances, he must bear them manfully and not querulously rebel against those who are in authority, because they have not proved infallible.

It is the lack of these qualities in our artisans that has hitherto hindered [Page 9] the success of co-operative production, and till they acquire them it is only in a few special cases that industrial operations can be profitable when undertaken by a community.

A good instance of this is found in the German railways. They were paying fair dividends and working pretty satisfactorily, but it was argued that by amalgamating the different lines the public could be carried much more cheaply, that the tariffs for the conveyance of goods could be equalised, the railway debt paid off by the profits, and finally an important addition would be made to the national revenue: so Government took them in hand.

For several years the enterprise was extremely advantageous to the State; in 1886 the Finance Minister had a credit balance of £125,000, and in the following year there was a still larger profit; but in 1890 the receipts, began to fall, and in 1892 a large sum had to be expended in rolling stock, while the permanent way was found to be in such sad disrepair that it is contemplated either to sell the railways or to farm them out. Now if this was the result under an almost absolute Government, and with so practical a people as the Germans, what would it be under democratic institutions and the free and easy methods of Socialism?

The Post Office, Telegraphs, Gas and Water supplies, and a few similar enterprises can be advantageously undertaken by Government. The Dockyards are certainly not a financial success; neither is there much likelihood that anything else of the nature of manufactures ever could be so, while if you endeavoured to improve the workers’ position by increasing the rate of payment, you would simply be taxing the community for the benefit of a class. It is only an extremely simple mechanical function which can be exercised on a large scale that seems suitable for nationalisation. A complicated industry, and above all, one where fashion and taste intervene, is best left to individual enterprise, stimulated by wholesome competition. Not the fratricidal grappling of throats in a mad struggle for superfluities that only burden their possessor, but the generous emulation which stimulates each worker to put forth his best efforts and to perfect his production, in order that the happiness of others may thereby be augmented.
It must also be borne in mind that under the Socialist scheme it would be somewhat difficult to maintain the efficient authority which now makes the Post Office so successful, and if you relaxed that authority chaos would ensue while if you vested all employment in a Labour Board with power to enforce its decrees, you would have a centralisation of authority that might readily prove dangerous to the liberty of the subject, unless perhaps, we could induce the Mahatmas to become our labour-lords.

The only thing then which ought absolutely and always to be national property, is the land. It was created by no man, and it is an element necessary for the life of everyone. Each Briton is entitled to the use of his portion of British land, and by the old law that portion was five free acres. Everyone who cannot obtain the use of that quantity on equitable terms for agricultural purposes, is robbed of his national birthright.

Here, therefore, we can justly insist upon Socialistic legislation. But we must act justly. By all means let the present holders of our heritage be paid in full for the estates they have legally acquired, but for that payment the labour of no man must be taxed.

All we have to concern ourselves about is that their land is restored to the people without further cavil or delay.

As our sturdy Saxon forefathers used to say, "A landless man is an unfree man", and no Briton can lawfully be enslaved. Any class, therefore, that insists on making us landless in perpetuity, for its own profit, deserves but little consideration at our hands. Their title is only a continuando of usurpation, and if they get any compensation for their loss, it is the rich, not the poor, who must pay it.

If we could but unite, and with one voice demand the righting of this wrong, half of our social grievances would vanish, and the rest would disappear in due course, provided we adopted suitable means.

Why, if you look the matter squarely in the face, industrial capital has but a very ephemeral existence. Would any machine last for five years if it were not constantly repaired, and at the end of twelve years what would remain of any aid to industry, if it were not periodically renewed?

It is not, therefore, the existing machinery, but the new and improved machinery of the future that our workers should determine to secure for themselves.

If they would cease their clamour for imaginary right, and apply themselves in a Theosophical spirit to the performance of duty, by perfecting the individual, the class would inevitably be advanced. While they try to reverse this natural order of things, but little real good can be gained. The revolution is ridiculously easy to effect if we only go the right way about it.

Let, say, for instance, a thousand men, following the same calling, combine and agree to deny themselves one shilling’s worth of beer, or some other luxury, every week. This, at the end of a year, would produce a capital of £2,600. With this a factory might be started, in which a certain number of them
could find employment. They should be paid the current rate of wages, and the profits should be added to the capital. As these would certainly be not less than £500, at the end of the second year they would have £5,720 at command, and so it would go on increasing year by year, until all were employed in their own factory, and then the profits could be employed Theosophically in helping others to obtain a like emancipation. [Page 11]

I have worked out the result and find that at the end of twelve years after starting the factory, the co-operators would have a capital of £126,088 and an income of £25,218 in addition to their wages.

Particulars of the 20% charged in the following account: — Saving in manufacturing, 10%. Saving in interest, 5%. Profit on sales, 5%.

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By this time then, the whole thousand would be employed in their own factory, with the right to £25 a year each in addition to their regular wages. If they were content to receive half that amount and added the balance to their capital, without any further subscription at the end of twenty years, if the same rate were maintained, each worker would be receiving £24 10s. 6d. a year in addition to wages, and his or her share in the capital would amount to £270. Consequently, if a worker joined the Society when thirty years old, he or she could be made entitled to a pension of at least fifty pounds a year at the age of sixty, and the Society would be able to give effective aid to any brothers or sisters who were seeking emancipation.

Subscriptions to cease, and half the yearly profits to be divided.
If this process were carried on throughout the kingdom, in a relatively short time all manufactures would be in the hands of the workers, and then, [Page 12] having no need to borrow money, payment of interest would be a thing of the past, and consequently no one would be able to live in idleness after he had consumed his capital. Thus, as no labour could be hired, and no money lent at interest, excessive fortunes would be dissipated by the natural law of dispersion, and no one would be able to avoid doing his own proper share of work.

When our workers are prepared to do this or something else on the same lines, there is no law to prevent their carrying it into effect: if they are not ready for self-sacrifice true Socialism is not for them. It should also be remembered that the number who can advantageously engage in any special manufacture is absolutely limited by the demand for the articles produced. You cannot compel people to pay for goods which they do not want, no matter how much labour, intelligence and skill has been expended in producing them. Therefore as municipal workshops would produce goods for which there is no demand, John Burns very wisely prognosticates that "they would end in failure and disappointment." (Westminster Review, September 21st, 1893.) It is this injudicious over-production which creates injurious competition, and it is only by judgment and a fraternal understanding among producers that this evil can be avoided. Government's interference would simply be mischievous.

What may be done by profit sharing, even with unfavourable conditions, is shown in the case of the South Metropolitan Gas Company. On July 1st, 1893, the workmen had £31,500 to their credit at the Company's bank and had invested £4,158 in the Company's shares. In a short time one of their number is to be elected a director, and if they continue investing their savings in the same way, before many years are over they may command a majority on the board and receive a lion's share of the profits. (Westminster Review, July 24th, 1893.)

Of course with the restoration of the land to the people a much larger proportion of the population would engage in agriculture than are able or willing to do so under existing circumstances, consequently the pressure on the town labour markets would at once be relieved, and so a good deal of the distress and

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degradation that we all so deplore would immediately be alleviated, and might gradually be extinguished.

I hold, then, that practical Theosophy is the only basis on which you can establish true Socialism. While our speculative politicians dream of improving the individual by amending legislation, Theosophists recognise that all laws are but formulated public convictions, and that these public convictions are the sum of individual convictions. They therefore seek to enlighten the individual, and through his regeneration to amend all social conditions.

When men and women feel and know that in reality there is but one-Be-ness [Page 13] in which all alike have their being, they will perceive that none can be truly blessed except in the blessedness of all.

When this conviction has been established in their inmost consciousness, they will live to promote that blessedness, and true Socialism will be the natural outcome, for none who is essentially altruistic can care for a pre-eminence of joy, much less for pleasures that are purchased by the privations of others.

Our workers then should consider first, not what occupation is most agreeable to them, but what work they can best do for the good of the community, and having found that, act upon the injunction "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might". To be continually brooding over personal rights or quibbling about your pay-rate shows but a paltry spirit. Real good for all can only be accomplished by individual self-sacrifice, and duty must ever precede right. It is only on this Theosophical basis that we have any chance of establishing true Socialism. If you insist on bringing all men to a common level, that level will certainly be a very low one, for it will have to be gauged by the meanest capacity. In their propositions Socialists always pre-suppose an ideal Humanity, but as that exists only in their consciousness of future possibilities, the legislation they demand would certainly prove a snare and a delusion to the Humanity of today, and the result could only be what Eugen Richter has so graphically described in his Pictures of the Future. Therefore I say become Theosophists before you try Socialism. To attempt to build our social edifice with unsound materials would be a terrible mistake.