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FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM

BY
BERNARD SHAW
SIR SYDNEY OLIVIER K.C.M.G.
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SIDNEY WF 3B
ANNIE BESANT &
GRAHAM WALLAS

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR
BERNARD SHAW

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SIDNEY WEBB

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THE FABIAN SOCIETY.

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THE FABIAN SOCIETY consists of men and women who are Socialists, that is to say, in the words of its "Basis" of those who aim at the reorganisation of Society by the emancipation of Land and Industrial Capital from individual and class-ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit. . . . It seeks to promote these ends by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relations between the individual and society in its economic, ethical, and political aspects.

The Society welcomes as members any persons, men and women, who desire to promote the growth of Socialist opinion and to hasten the enactment of Socialist measures.

The Society is largely occupied in the endeavour to discover in what way the principles of Socialism can be applied both to the political problems which from time to time come up for settlement, and to those problems of the future which are at present rather political theory than actual politics. It holds fortnightly meetings for the discussion of papers on such subjects by members and others, some of which are published as Tracts.

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- I. MEMBERS, who must sign the Basis and be elected by the Com. Their subscription is not fixed, each is expected to pay according to his means. They control the Society through their Executive Committee and at business meetings.
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- III. SUBSCRIBERS, who must pay at least 5/- a year, and can attend lectures.

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Lists of Publications, Annual Report, Form of Application as Member or Associate, and any other information can be obtained on application, personally or by letter, of the Secretary.

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Fabian Essays in Socialism

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EDITED WITH PREFACE BY
G. BERNARD SHAW.

INTRODUCTION BY
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INTRODUCTION.

By SIDNEY WEBB.

THERE is still a demand for these Essays, published just thirty years ago ; in spite of the fact that they have ever since been selling in cheap editions in various languages, and although more elaborate works on Socialism, written with greater knowledge and experience, are available. But their publication in 1889 has a certain historical interest for the British Socialist Movement ; and it seems useful, so long as purchasers can be found for them, not to let them go out of print.

We were young in those days—I speak as the youngest of the seven essayists—and, I suppose, as eagerly presumptuous as young people ought to be. The Fabian Society¹ in which we were associated was already six years old ; but it had still neither an office nor a salaried Secretary, nor any other income than its meagre membership could contribute from their scanty earnings as journalists and very junior Civil Servants. We spent what free time we had, after earning our daily bread, in reading and talking—in studying everything from bluebooks to art, from history and politics to novels and poetry ; and perpetually discussing and lecturing, among ourselves and before anybody who would listen to us. This particular set of lectures was only one among many that we perpetrated, but, whether because of our modesty, because of our poverty, or because of a certain lack of enterprise or want of insight

¹ A complete *History of the Fabian Society*, by E. R. Pease, its Secretary for a quarter of a century, was published in 1915. This, and all books mentioned in the following pages, if still in print, can be obtained at the Fabian Bookshop, 25, Tothill, St., Westminster

among contemporary publishers, it was the only series that found its way into print. We were learning as fast as we were teaching; and we were in those years too constantly occupied to be able to give much time to elaborate authorship. Probably everyone of us, after the book was out, was annoyed at the callowness of his contribution, and desired to rewrite it. Yet the deed was done; and the volume has ever since remained unrevised. It is now once more reissued unchanged, save for the correction of two printer's errors that survived the vigilant proof-reading of the original editor.

It may be of interest to recall the fact that the book was produced without the services of any publisher. For the original edition, we decided ourselves the format, chose the type, and gave the order to the printer. Walter Crane kindly designed for us a striking cover, and Miss May Morris a decorative back, both of which we imposed on the bookbinder, taking care, with both printer and binder, to choose firms paying the Trade Union rate of wages, and of good repute among the operatives. We issued a circular asking for orders for copies; and as the orders were received the copies were packed up at the Honorary Secretary's house by himself and the volunteer Assistant Secretary, and posted to the subscribers. To our surprise the first edition was immediately sold out, yielding a modest profit to the Fabian Society, to which the seven authors had formally conveyed their copyright. A second impression was also rapidly sold, and then the book was entrusted to a publishing firm for the issue of successive cheap reprints. It has been repeatedly reprinted in the United States, and has been translated into most of the languages of Europe.

Of the seven authors I may observe that they have, in the thirty years that have elapsed, driven their pens over an unconscionable amount of paper that has not appeared in book form. Two of them, in this respect only recalling Charles Lamb, may claim that a large part of their "works" is buried in those archives where moulder the minutes and drafts by which the official business of the British Empire is carried on. All the seven have done their share in journalism. Two of them have filled professorial chairs. Two have died, before the normal span; but all the remaining five have been, at one or other time, actively engaged in different forms of public administration,

from serving on a Vestry to governing a Colony. But notwithstanding these avocations, the British Museum Catalogue reveals that the seven are responsible, among them, for more than a hundred volumes, besides an uncounted host of minor publications. It may be added that, unlike most coteries of young people, this one did not break up. The two members who have died remained in the Fabian Society until death; of the other five, three remained constantly in the Society; a fourth, for some years absent, has rejoined; and the fifth, though no longer a member, remains in intellectual intimacy and close sympathy. From time to time one or other of the seven has been at the ends of the earth, or temporarily abstracted by other interests or duties. But throughout the whole thirty years there have always been in London three or four out of the seven, with the others coming periodically back from geographical or other excursions of one sort or another, intimately associated in intellectual speculation and political work, sharing their thoughts, discussing each other's inventions and discoveries, often revising each other's writings and habitually co-operating in proposals and projects.

A word of remembrance is due to those who have died. William Clarke (1852—1901) never found time to write the book on Political Science for which his learning and experience, and especially his insight into what is essential and significant in the changes that are taking place in the world, eminently qualified him. His record is that of a particularly sane and exceptionally well-informed political journalist, whose contributions were valued in the United States even more than in this country, but to whom adverse circumstances never gave a chance for more prominent or more enduring work.¹ His contribution to the volume was, as can now be recognised, impressively prophetic—by virtue of acute insight and exceptional knowledge—in regard to the subsequent course of consolidation of capitalist interests.

Hubert Bland (1856—1914) also spent in journalism

¹ See *William Clarke, a Collection of his Writings*, edited by Herbert Burrows and J A Hobson, with biographical sketch, 1908; *Essays on Mazzini*, with Introduction by William Clarke, 1887; *Political Orations from Wentworth to Macaulay*, with Introduction by William Clarke, 1889; *Walt Whitman*, by William Clarke, 1892. Clarke edited the shortlived *Progressive Review* in 1895.

abilities which would have made him, under other circumstances, a potent and successful editor. For many years he was, through the columns of widely circulating journals, the trusted and inspiring political and social teacher of many thousands of people ¹

Turning now, to the book itself—which, it may be mentioned, stood almost alone, at the date of its publication, as an exposition, on the lines of British thought and experience, of the modern Socialist Movement ²—what is most interesting to one, at least, of the contributors, is to mark, in the light of thirty years of subsequent experience and thirty years advance of Political Science, where we went wrong and what we omitted. No one should read these essays of thirty years ago without realising how far they fall short, to-day, of any adequate exposition of British Socialism; and even the additional works mentioned in the footnotes are very far from affording any complete idea of the manner in which the Socialist vision has been filled out by more detailed studies ³

It is, perhaps, significant that the part of the book that comes most triumphantly through the ordeal of such an examination is, throughout, the economic analysis. I think it is not merely the partiality of friendship that finds in the first essay a survey of the economic evolution of society which, for terse comprehensiveness and brilliant generalisation, has not since been excelled in any language. But throughout the whole

¹ A volume of *Essays* by Hubert Bland was edited by Cecil Chesterton, 1914. His books were *With the Eyes of a Man*, 1905; *Letters to a Daughter*, 1906; *The Happy Moralist*, 1907; *Olivia's Latchkey*, 1913.

² At the present day (1919), when almost a majority of the publications dealing with Political Science bear a socialist imprint, and almost more is predicated about the Organisation of the Socialist State of the Future than is revealed about the Capitalist Organisation of to-day, it is hard to realise the extent of our innovation. There was available, in 1889, to the English reader, apart from the various manifestoes of the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, principally by William Morris and Messrs E. Belfort Bax and H. M. Hyndman, and a dozen or so pamphlets by these and other writers, little else than Mr H. M. Hyndman's *England for All* (1881) and *Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (1883) and a volume of essays by Mr Belfort Bax, *The Religion of Socialism* (1887). Of Karl Marx, only the 1848 *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1888) had then appeared in English.

³ For a special propagandist appeal, see *This Misery of Boots*, by H. G. Wells, together with *New Worlds for Old* and *A Modern Utopia*, by the same.

book what is distinctively economic is, in my judgment, as incisive and accurate to-day as it was when it was written. Tested by a whole generation of further experience and criticism, I conclude that, in 1889, we knew our Political Economy, and that our Political Economy was sound.

Our history, though I believe, essentially accurate, was plainly based on less solid a grounding of knowledge. We evidently had not fully penetrated the moving shadow that is made, according to our present educational curriculum, always to cover the doings of the couple of generations immediately preceding our own. The gradual transformation, both of opinion and of institutions, from an essentially Individualist to an essentially Collectivist basis, will be found more fully and more precisely described, significantly enough, not in any propagandist publication, but in the chapter entitled "Social Movements" in volume XII of the *Cambridge Modern History*, which the Fabian Society has been permitted to republish by the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, under a new title.¹

Moreover, our knowledge of the social and industrial forces of our own country was far from complete. We evidently attached quite insufficient importance to Trade Unionism, which the book never mentions as a political force, or as constituting any essential part of the social structure. It is clear that we had little notion, in 1889, of the enduring value and indispensable social function of Vocational Organisation of any sort, and we had no anticipation that it was to be, as is nowadays commonly accepted, a permanent part of social organisation, destined, in the State of To-morrow, for important public functions. We very soon set about remedying this particular gap in our knowledge, and the publication, in 1894, of the *History of Trade Unionism*, and at the end of 1897, of the

¹ *Towards Social Democracy* ? 1916, (Fabian Society) price 1s. See also *The Making of Modern England*, by Gilbert Slater, 1913, *The History of Factory Legislation*, by B. L. Hutchins and Amy Spencer, revised edition, 1911, *Minimum Rates in the Channelling Industry*, 1914, and *Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Trade*, 1915, both by R. H. Tawney, *Riches and Poverty*, 1905, latest edition, 1913, *The Future of Work*, 1914, and others, by Sir Leo Chiozza Money, *Round About a Pound a Week*, by Mrs. Pember Reeves, 1913, Fabian Tract No. 124, *State Control of Trusts, Trusts and the State*, 1901, and *The Trust Movement in British Industry*, 1907, by H. W. Macrosty.

comprehensive analysis of the whole structure and function of the workmen's organisations entitled *Industrial Democracy*, effectively brought the Trade Union Movement into our common consciousness. We may perhaps say that it did more than this. It laid the foundation for, and possibly contributed to promote, in a younger generation, the whole series of studies of different aspects of Vocational Organisation, and its place in the society of the future, which, whatever we may think of their elaboration into what is called " Guild Socialism," constitute, perhaps, the most important addition that this century has yet made to Socialist thought.¹

We were similarly unappreciative of the Co-operative Movement. Influenced, perhaps, by the conventional detraction as to its failure to live up to its ideals—a detraction which ignored the fundamental cleavage between Associations of Producers and Associations of Consumers—we did not recognise in the working-class Co-operative Store any part of the social structure of the future. Hence we did not, in our constructive forecasts, make any use of the very important discoveries in practical organisation that the Co-operators had, from 1844 onward, stumbled upon; we did not realise the extent to which these would render practicable the social advantage of producing, not in the mere anticipation of profit but in order to satisfy an ascertained demand; and how they would demonstrate the success, in the extensive business of household supplies of the supersession of the profitmaking capitalist by an essentially Collectivist organisation. Our omission was made good by the publication, in 1890, of *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*, by one who presently joined our group.²

¹ See, in particular, the various works by G. D. H. Cole, often acutely critical of our general views, especially *The World of Labour*, *Self-Government in Industry*, *Labour in the Commonwealth*, *Trade Unionism on the Railways*, and *An Introduction to Trade Unionism Professional Associations, and English Teachers and their Professional Organization* (Supplements to the *New Statesman* of April 21st and 28th, 1917, Sept 25th and October 2nd, 1915), *Trade Unionism*, by C. M. Lloyd, 1915, *The Tailoring Trade*, by F. W. Galton, 1896, *Women in the Engineering Trade*, by Barbara Drake

² *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*, by Beatrice Potter (afterwards Mrs. Sidney Webb), 1890. For a later analysis, see *Co-operative Production and Profit-Sharing*, and *The Co-operative Movement*, being two reports of the Fabian Research Department, published as Supplements to *The New Statesman*, February 14th, and May 30th, 1914. *Co-operation and the Future of Industry*, by L. S. Woolf, 1919.

We concerned ourselves more about Local Government than about Trade Unionism or Co-operation ; but in 1889, in common with most Socialists (and, for that matter, also most Individualists), we were still groping after the illuminating idea that would assign to our Local Authorities their appropriate place and function in the Social Organism. In these Essays we slipped into thinking of them as organising production for the sake of the unemployed and as ultimately developing, side by side with capitalist enterprise, alternative factories and shops, which would, under the management of Town and County Councils, beat the profit-maker with his own weapons, at his own game. It did not occur to us in 1889 that the Parish Vestry, the Municipality, and the County Council were, like the Co-operative Societies, essentially Associations of Consumers, not Associations of Producers ; Associations in which membership was obligatory on all local residents, instead of being voluntary, but the function of which was equally the collective provision for the citizens, as consumers, of whatever services they, as consumers, required. When we tumbled to this idea—an important addition to Socialist theory—we saw at once the extensive sphere that must necessarily be assigned, in any highly organised and densely populated community, to “Municipal Socialism,” as contrasted with the “State Socialism,” which is what had commonly been thought of prior to that date ; and the important part to be played in the Socialist State by its various democratically organised and practically autonomous Local Governing Bodies. We came very vividly to appreciate the significance of their manifold functions in ridding us from the hypothetical tyranny of a single national employer, inevitably “bureaucratic” in character, no less than from the incubus of an all-pervading uniformity of social life. In the State of To-morrow, as we realised, those who did not like the arrangements of Hampstead would always be able to move to Highgate and live under a different local government. We accordingly saw our way to a vast increase in the consciousness of personal freedom, a vista of endless diversity, the practical opportunity for an indefinitely varied development of human personality, under the most complete and all-embracing Collectivism. We threw ourselves with energy into the study and the propaganda of “Municipal

Socialism," the steady increase of which has resulted not merely in greatly widening the available experience of Collectivism, and in the placing, by 1919, of literally thousands of members of the Labour Party on Local Governing Bodies, but also in considerably filling out the vision of the organisation of the Socialist State.¹

We were, if somewhat better informed, almost as vague about the functions of the National Government as about the Local Authorities. For some years yet we were to talk about Nationalisation only in general terms; and it was largely by a subsequent generation that this policy, with regard to the means of communication and transport to the mining industry in particular, and to some extent, banking insurance and international remittance, was worked out in practical detail.² About the future of agriculture, whilst we instinctively saved ourselves from any sympathy with a reversion to a peasant

¹ Among the literary results of this development may be mentioned *The Common Sense of Municipal Trading*, by G Bernard Shaw, 1908 *The London Programme*, by Sidney Webb, 1892, and *Grants in Aid*, 1911 by the same, *The Parish and the County*, *The Manor and the Borough* and *The Story of the King's Highway*, all by Sidney and Beatrice Webb *The Case for Municipal Drink*, by E R Pease, 1904, *Local Government in Scotland*, by Mabel Atkinson, 1904, *Town Planning in Practice*, by Raymond Unwin, 1909, *An Example of Communal Currency [The Guernsey Market House]*, by J Theodore Harris, 1911, *The Municipal Manual*, by Albert E Lauder, 1907, *The Public Health Agitation*, by B L Hutchins, 1909, *The Reorganisation of Local Government*, by C M Lloyd, 1919. Many of the "Fabian Tracts" have dealt with Local Government, notably No 8, *Facts for London*, No 62, *Parish and District Councils*, No 109, *Cottage Plans and Common Sense*, by Raymond Unwin, No 122, *Municipal Milk and Public Health*, No 125, *Municipalisation by Provinces*, No 137, *Parish Councils and Village Life*, No 138, *Municipal Trading*, No 148, *What a Health Committee can do*, No 156, *What an Education Committee can do*; No 172, *What about the Rates or Municipal Finance and Municipal Autonomy*, by Sidney Webb No 173, *Public versus Private Electricity Supply*, by C Ashmore Baker

² See *The Collectivist State in the Making*, 1914, *The Nationalisation of Railways*, 1908, second edition, 1911, and *The Case for Railway Nationalisation*, 1913, all by A Emil Davies, *State and Municipal Enterprise*, by the Fabian Research Department of 15 May, 1916; *How to Pay for the War*, by the same, 1916, with its separately issued parts, *The Development of the Post Office*, *A Public Service of Railway and Canal Transport*, *The Nationalisation of the Coal Supply*, *A State Insurance Department*, and *A Revolution in the Income Tax*, *Should our Railways be Nationalised?* by W Cunningham, 1906, *State Industrialism (the Story of the Phalanx)*, by F W Hayes, 1894, *A Levy on Capital* by F W Pethick Lawrence, 1919, *National Finance and the Capital Levy*, by Sidney Webb, 1919, Fabian Tract No 164, *Gold and State Banking*, and No 147, *Capital and Compensation*, both by E R Pease

proprietary State, we were in 1889, almost completely un-speculative.¹

Passing now from structure to function, it is plain to-day that we went far astray in what was said about Unemployment and the Unemployed. It was not that we made too much of the evil of Unemployment. We were (as we ought to have been) horribly oppressed by the tragic misery of households brought to destitution, and whole families ruined, merely as a consequence of the recurring cyclical depressions of trade, but we understood no better than other people how to grapple with the problem, either in the way of prevention or in that of treatment. Through lack of adequate investigation of the phenomena, we erred, in common not only with other Socialists, but also with the ordinary Economists and Politicians, in assuming that recurrent periods of widespread Unemployment could not in practice be prevented under any system short of a completely organised Collectivism; and, like so many other well-meaning people, of diverse opinions, we were in 1889, still speculating as to the possibility of organising "the Unemployed" as such, so that their several efforts at production might mutually supply their common needs. But our failure to devise any practicable method of dealing with the "non-effectives" was not confined to the problems presented by the able-bodied adults who might find themselves involuntarily unemployed. There was, in 1889, on the side of the Socialists, no study of, and no scheme for the social provision for any of the non-effectives of society, whether orphan children, the sick or the infirm, the involuntarily unemployed or the aged. Most visions of the future social order looked at it, almost exclusively, as if society were, or ought to be composed entirely of healthy adults, free from accidents and exempt, if not from death, at any rate from senility. This gap in our knowledge we did not

¹ Subsequent work has been mainly historical and descriptive, or devoted to immediately practicable reforms. See *The Rural Problem*, by H. D. Harben, 1913; *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields*, by Gilbert Slater; *The Small Holding*, 1903, *The Awakening of England*, 1912, new edition, 1919, and *The Tyranny of the Country Side*, 1913, and others, by F. E. Green; *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, by R. H. Tawney, 1912; *Life in an English Village*, by Maud Davies, 1909; *Socialism and Agriculture* (No. 2 of Fabian Socialist Series); Fabian Tract, No. 161, *Afforestation and Unemployment*.

fill until the appointment in 1905, of Mr. George Lansbury and Mrs. Sidney Webb to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the Relief of Distress from Unemployment ; which resulted, after four years of strenuous investigation, in which a good many other members of the Society took part, in the working-out of an elaborate scheme—constituting the Minority Report of the Commission—first, for the actual prevention of any widespread or continuous Unemployment, even in our present social order, by the maintenance at an approximately even level, of the aggregate weekly demand for wage-labour, season by season, and year by year, to be effected by nothing more impracticable than a rearrangement of the present public orders for works and services—a course which has been demonstrated to be both statistically adequate and easily within the capacity of the first Government that chooses to undertake it ; and secondly, for the wisely designed full and ample provision, under Democratic control, of whatever is required for the efficient nurture and maintenance of every section of the “ non-effectives,” from the orphan infant to the friendless aged. In the world as we know it, this social provision for the non-effectives must form an indispensable part of the Socialist conception of the State, and for this essentially social function appropriate social structure has necessarily to be provided.¹

A more general shortcoming, affecting both structure and function, was our failure to “ think internationally.” With

¹ The Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission was republished in 1909 in two volumes, by S. and B. Webb, as *The Abolition of the Poor Law* and *The Public Organisation of the Labour Market*. See also *The Prevention of Destitution* by the same authors, 1911 ; *Socialism and National Minimum* (No. IV in Fabian Socialist Series), Fabian Tract, No. 159. *The Necessary Basis of Society*, by Sidney Webb. For the medical problem, see *A Public Medical Service*, by David McKail and Wm. Jones, 1919 ; Fabian Tract, No. 160, *A National Medical Service*, by F. Lawson Dodd, *The State and the Doctor*, by S. and B. Webb, 1911, and, for the special problem of the adolescent, *The Town Child*, 1907, and *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, by Reginald Bray, 1911, *Child Labour in the United Kingdom*, 1914, and *The Labour Exchange in relation to Boy and Girl Labour*, by F. Keeling, 1909, *The Health and Physique of School Children*, 1913, and *Juvenile Labour Exchanges and After-Care*, by A. Greenwood, *School Care Committees*, by Maud Davies, 1909, *Boy Life and Labour*, by Arnold Freeman, 1914 ; *The School Doctor in the Home*, by Dr. Marion Phillips, 1913 ; Fabian Tract No. 145, *The Case for School Nurseries*, by Mrs. Townshend, No. 154, *The Case for School Clinics*, by L. Haden Guest.

the partial exception of William Clarke, we had none of us given attention either to the continental Socialist Movements, or to international relations. We had not attended the first congress, at Paris in 1889, of the revived "International," and, except for our studies of Proudhon, Lassalle and Karl Marx, and some slight personal acquaintance with Socialist exiles in London, we knew practically nothing of what was happening in the Socialist world outside our own country. But here, too, we quickly improved our qualifications.¹ The Fabian Society was represented at the next International Socialist Congress at Brussels in 1891, and has ever since taken its share in international relations. But we had our own view of internationalism. We had little sympathy with the ideal of a universal cosmopolitanism which some Socialists and many Liberals more or less consciously cherished, as an exaggeration, if not a perversion, of the teachings of Mazzini on the one hand,¹ and Cobden on the other. What we aimed at was, literally, an organised "inter-nationalism," in which national characteristics among the manual-working wage earners no less than among governments, far from becoming obliterated or straightened out into a mechanical uniformity, would be not only separately developed, but also differentiated even further than at present. We counted on each racial group or Nation-State pursuing its own evolution, and shaping its own destiny, uninterruptedly in its own way, intensifying thereby its characteristic faculties, and thus increasing the special services that

¹ See *Modern Socialism*, by R. C. K. Ensor, 1903, *German Social Democracy*, by Bertrand Russell, 1896; Fabian Tract No. 109, *The Socialist Movement in Germany*, and *Trade Unionism in Germany*, by W. S. Sanders; *Socialism and the Empire: A Manifesto*, edited by G. Bernard Shaw, 1900; and *Socialism and the Fiscal Question*, by the same, 1904, *The Fiscal Dictionary*, 1910, and *Elements of the Fiscal Problem*, 1903, by Sir Leo Chiozza Money

White Capital and Coloured Labour, by Sir Sydney Olivier, K.C.M.G., 1909; and *The League of Nations and Primitive Peoples*, 1918, by the same; *India and the Empire*, 1914; *India a Nation*, 1915, and *The Case for India*, 1918, by Mrs. Annie Besant.

The War of Steel and Gold, 1914, and *A League of Nations*, 1917, by H. N. Brailsford, Fabian Tract, No. 184, *The Russian Revolution and British Democracy*, by Julius West; No. 186, *Central Africa and the League of Nations*, by R. C. Hawkin; *The Conditions of a Lasting Peace and The Future of Constantinople*, by Leonard S. Woolf, 1917, *Peace and War in Europe*, by Gilbert Slater, 1915.

it could render to the world ; in order to enrich the common future, not only by exchange but actually by the continuous increase of a desirable variety in qualities and achievements, even in such secondary matters as costume and language. We held that, whilst profiting to the utmost by what we could learn from each other, and without imagining or seeking a superiority which it is, between combinations of qualitative differences, always impossible to measure, it behoves the British to be as good Britons as they can possibly make themselves, and the French as good Frenchmen. This, at any rate, was the synthesis between patriotism and internationalism that we evolved for ourselves ; and to this we tenaciously held ; yielding neither to " Imperialism " on the one hand, nor to " Little Englandism " on the other ; and seeking always to replace the ignorant pride of pre-eminence of race or dominance of Empire by a recognition, among all States and peoples, —to use a phrase of John Stuart Mill— of " that best kind of equality, reciprocal superiority ; " always prompt to recognise and acknowledge, for the common service of all, every feature in which any race essentially differs from, and, thereby in that particular excels another, even if that other be our own.¹

Generally, it may be said, I think, that we concentrated our thought too much on the actual conditions that would in an effective Democracy, enable the great mass of the people to secure for themselves material prosperity, social freedom and a progressive advance in civilisation, with all the development of individual personality that these conditions alone can make possible. We did not sufficiently remember that it is equally indispensable that the whole people should feel themselves to be prosperous ; that they should have an acute consciousness of their freedom ; that they should, as a completely Democratic community, not merely govern but also be continuously aware of the government they are exercising. It was not—as is always ignorantly alleged of Socialists—that we put our faith too exclusively in " machinery," even social machinery ; or that we " ignored human nature " in the

¹ A notable attempt to work this out into a practicable form of " Supernational Authority "—called subsequently a League of Nations—was made by a Committee of the Fabian Society, after important studies
L. S. Woolf, see *International Government*, by him (1915)

ordinary sense. We were painfully aware of the difficulties—several of us were personally experienced in them—of “making things work;” and of the unavoidable “time factor” in all social change. But we did not sufficiently allow for the psychological fact that no man is free who does not think himself free; and that no one is benefiting by the responsibilities of governing, unless he is aware that he is governing. We had thought out the conditions of social freedom in a Democracy; but we had not thought out the conditions of a generally diffused consciousness of social freedom. And whilst we were strong on Liberty and Fraternity, as essentials of Democracy, we were apt to forget Equality, as a no less indispensable element in Socialism. We presently acquired something of what we lacked from our nearer acquaintance with Co-operation, Municipal Government, and, above all, Trade Unionism; but much had to be learned from the studies subsequently made in what may be called Social Psychology, to which some of us contributed.¹

If there is little “Feminism” in these Essays, it was not from any lack of sympathy with the aspirations of women to the fullest freedom of opportunity and development. We had persistently demanded equal adult suffrage in our lectures and manifestoes; and we lost no opportunity of placing the women’s case on its broadest basis, beyond all considerations of momentary expediency. The Society organised a special section to ensure that all questions should be dealt with with complete sex equality, and the efforts and publications of the Fabian Women’s Group have had their share in the general advance of thought.²

¹ Mention may be made of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* by G. Bernard Shaw 1891; and, indeed, all his subsequent works; together with the books and plays of H. Granville Barker; and, in another field, Fabian Tract, No. 180, *The Philosophy of Socialism*, and other works by A. Clutton Brock. Specially significant are *Human Nature in Politics*, 1908, and *The Great Society*, 1914, both by Graham Wallas; see also his *Life of Francis Place*, 1898, revised edition 1918.

² See Fabian Tract, No. 131, *The Decline in the Birth-rate*, by Sidney Webb; No. 149, *The Endowment of Motherhood*, by H. D. Harben; No. 157, *The Working Life of Women*, by B. L. Hutchins; No. 162, *Family Life on a Pound a Week*, by Mrs. Pember Reeves; No. 175, *The Economic Foundations of the Women’s Movement*, by M.A., and No. 178, *The War, Women and Unemployment*, by the Women’s Group Executive.

Women Workers in Seven Professions, by Professor Edith Morley; *Round about a Pound a Week*, by Mrs. Pember Reeves, 1913; *Conflicting Ideals*, by B. L. Hutchins, *Women and the Labour Party*, by Marion Phillips, D.Sc. 1918; *Economics, descriptive and theoretical*, 1911, and *Wealth, a brief explanation of the causes of economic welfare*, 1914, both by Mabel Atkinson and Margaret McKillop; and *Efficiency Methods*, 1917, by M. & A. McKillop. Fabian Tract, No. 151, *The Point of Honour*, by Ruth C. Bentsinck.

The renewed insistence on Equality—equality of material circumstances no less than equality before the law and equality of voting power and eligibility for office—British Socialism owes to Mr. Bernard Shaw.¹

One final word may be allowed upon an error that we did not make, although the Fabian Society has been persistently accused of it. Though we put no faith in a "physical force" revolution, achieved by a "class-conscious Minority," we did not expect that Socialism could ever be realised, or, indeed, that much progress could be made towards it, without the formation, and the entry into British politics, of a definitely Socialist Party, putting itself in opposition to both the Liberal and the Conservative Parties. This is the doctrine very distinctly emphasised in these essays, notably the last two, which deal with the "Transition to Social Democracy" and "The Outlook." We believed, with all our might, in what was called "Permeation"—that is to say, the inculcation of Socialist thought and Socialist projects into the minds not merely of complete converts, but of those whom we found in disagreement with us—and we spared no pains in these propagandist efforts, not among political Liberals or Radicals only, but also among political Conservatives, not only among Trade Unionists and Co-operators but also among Employers and Financiers. So far as our opportunities allowed, we plied them all with ideas and projects that we considered to make in our direction. I do not suppose that, nowadays, any one would question that this was powerful and successful propaganda at a period when no other form of political action was open to us. But we were at the same time striving persistently to get on foot an independent political party, which would hold Socialist views and adopt a definitely Socialist programme. We recognised—as events have proved, accurately—that for such a party, in this country in this generation, the only practicable basis was the wage-earning class, and the only available machinery was the Trade Union organisation. We had, in 1889, already been at it for a couple of years,² taking every

¹ See his lecture on *Equality* published by the National Liberal Club, 1914, and in the *Metropolitan Magazine* (New York)

² See, in particular, the following Fabian Tracts, No 6 of 1887, *The True Radical Programme*; No 11, of 1890, *The Workers' Political Programme*, No 40 of 1893, *The Fabian Election Manifesto*, No 49 of 1894, *A Plan of Campaign for Labour*.

opportunity, by lecture and pamphlet, and by personal intercourse, to persuade the Trade Unions and Trades Councils to constitute such a Party of Labour, to which we promised whatever personal assistance we could give. For seven years these efforts produced next to no apparent result. Not until 1893 came the formation—in which the Fabian Society gladly took part—of the Independent Labour Party. In 1900, when at last the Trades Union Congress was induced to set up the “Labour Representation Committee,” which became, in 1906, the present Labour Party, the Fabian Society participated in the very first meeting; and has ever since formed a constituent part of the organisation, sending one or more of its members to the Executive Committee. Those who read *Labour and the New Social Order*¹—the detailed constructive programme which the Labour Party adopted for the General Election of 1918—will see how completely and definitely “Socialist” this Party has become; and how exactly it corresponds with what the last two essays of the present volume had, in 1889, in contemplation. It is also instructive to contrast this programme with that printed in the second of these Essays, as representing all that which we had managed, even nominally, to impose on the most advanced “Radicalism” of 1888. What the Labour Party will make of British social politics during the next thirty years, by which time some one else may write a new Introduction for another edition of *Fabian Essays*, offers material for an interesting forecast, from which I prudently refrain.

SIDNEY WEBB.

November, 1919.

¹ *Labour and the New Social Order* (Labour Party, 33, Eccleston Square, London, S W., price 2d)

² See *The Aims of Labour*, by the Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson, M P., 1918; *The Labour Party*, by Conrad Noel, 1906; *The Political Reorganisation of the People*, by W. S. Sanders.

PREFACE

TO THE 1908 REPRINT.

SINCE 1889 the Socialist movement has been completely transformed throughout Europe; and the result of the transformation may fairly be described as Fabian Socialism. In the eighteen-eighties, when Socialism revived in England for the first time since the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, it was not at first realized that what had really been suppressed for good and all was the romantic revolutionary Liberalism and Radicalism of 1848, to which the Socialists had attached themselves as a matter of course, partly because they were themselves romantic and revolutionary, and partly because both Liberals and Socialists had a common object in Democracy.

Besides this common object the two had a common conception of method in revolution. They were both catastrophists. Liberalism had conquered autocracy and bureaucracy by that method in England and France, and then left industry to make what it could of the new political conditions by the unregulated action of competition between individuals. Briefly, the Liberal plan was to cut off the King's head, and leave the rest to Nature, which was supposed to gravitate towards economic harmonies when not restrained by tyrannical governments. The Socialists were very far ahead of the Liberals in their appreciation of the preponderant importance of industry, even going so far as to maintain, with Buckle and Marx, that all social institutions whatever were imposed by economic conditions, and that there was fundamentally

only, one tyranny: the tyranny of Capital. Yet even the Socialists had so far formed their political habits in the Liberal school that they were quite disposed to believe that if you cut off the head of King Capital, you might expect to see things come right more or less spontaneously.

No doubt this general statement shews the Revolutionaries of 1848-71 as simpler than they appear on their own records. Proudhon was full of proposals: one of them, the minimum wage, turns out to be of the very first importance now that Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb have put the case for it on an invincible basis of industrial fact and economic theory. Lassalle really knew something of the nature of law, the practice of Government, and the mind of the governing classes. Marx, though certainly a bit of a Liberal fatalist (did he not say that force is the midwife of progress without reminding us that force is equally the midwife of chaos, and chaos the midwife of martial law?), was at all events no believer in *Laissez-faire*. Socialism involves the introduction of design, contrivance, and co-ordination, by a nation consciously seeking its own collective welfare, into the present industrial scramble for private gain; and as it is clear that this cannot be a spontaneous result of a violent overthrow of the existing order, and as the Socialists of 1848-71 were not blind, it would be impossible to substantiate a claim for Fabian Essays as the first text-book of Socialism in which catastrophism is repudiated as a method of Socialism.

Therefore we must not say that the Revolutionists and Internationalists of 1848-71 believed in a dramatic overthrow of the capitalist system in a single convulsion, followed by the establishment of a new heaven, a new earth, and a new humanity. They were visionaries, no doubt: all political idealists are; but they were quite as practical as the Conservatives and Liberals who now believe that the triumph of their party will secure the happiness and peace of the country. All the same, it was almost impossible to induce them to speak or think of the Socialist state of the future in terms of the existing

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human material for it. They talked of Communes, and, more vaguely and less willingly, of central departments to co-ordinate the activities of the Communes; but if you ventured to point out that these apparently strange and romantic inventions were simply city corporations under the Local Government Board, they vehemently repudiated such a construction, and accused you of reading the conditions of the present system into Socialism. They had all the old Liberal mistrust of governments and bureaucracy and all the old tendency of bourgeois revolutionists to idolize the working class. They had no suspicion of the extent to which the very existence of society depends on the skilled work of administrators and experts, or how much wisdom and strength of character is required for their control by popular representatives. They actually believed that when their efforts throughout Europe had demonstrated the economics of Socialism to the proletariats of the great capitals, the cry "Proletarians of all lands: unite," would be responded to; and that Capitalism would fall before an International Federation of the working classes of Europe, not in the sense in which some future historian will summarize two or three centuries (in which sense they may prove right enough), but as an immediate practical plan of action likely to be carried through in twenty years by Socialist societies holding completely and disdainfully aloof from ordinary politics. In short, they were romantic amateurs, and, as such, were enormously encouraged and flattered when Marx and Engels insisted on the "scientific" character of their movement in contrast to the "Utopian" Socialism of Owen, Fourier, St. Simon, and the men of the 1820-48 phase. When the events of 1871 in Paris tested them practically, their hopeless public incapacity forced their opponents to exterminate them in the most appalling massacre of modern times—all the more ghastly because it was a massacre of the innocents.

Public opinion in Europe was reconciled to the massacre by the usual process of slandering the victims. Now had Europe been politically educated no slanders would have

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been necessary; for even had it been humanly possible that all the Federals mown down with mitrailleuses in Paris were incendiaries and assassins, it would still have been questionable whether indiscriminate massacre is the right way to deal with incendiaries and assassins. But there can be no question as to what must be done with totally incompetent governors. The one thing that is politically certain nowadays is that if a body of men upset the existing government of a modern state without sufficient knowledge and capacity to continue the necessary and honest part of its work, and if, being unable to do that work themselves, they will not let anyone else do it either, their extermination becomes a matter of immediate necessity. It will avail them nothing that they aim higher than their fathers did; that their intentions are good, their action personally disinterested, and their opponents selfish and venal routiners who would themselves be equally at a loss if they had to create a new order instead of merely pulling the wires of an old one. Anyone who looks at the portraits of the members of the Paris Commune can see at a glance that they compared very favorably in all the external signs of amiability and refinement with any governing body then or now in power in Europe. But they could not manage the business they took upon themselves; and Thiers could. Marx's demonstration that they were heroes and martyrs and that Thiers and his allies were rascals did not help in the least, though it was undeniably the ablest document in the conflict of moral clap-trap that obscured the real issues—so able indeed as a piece of literature, that more than thirty years after its publication it struck down the Marquis de Gallifet as if it had appeared in the *Temps* or *Débats* of the day before. It was amiable of the Federals to be so much less capable of exterminating Thiers than he was of exterminating them; but sentimental amiability is not by itself a qualification for administering great modern States.

Now the Fabian Society, born in 1884, and reaching the age of discretion in less than two years, had no mind to be exterminated. Martyrdom was described by one

of us as "the only way in which a man can become famous without ability." Further, we had no illusions as to the treatment we should receive if, like the Paris Federals, we terrified the property classes before they were disabled by a long series of minor engagements. In Paris in 1871, ordinary sane people hid themselves in their houses for weeks under the impression that the streets were not safe: they did not venture out until they ran a serious risk of being shot at sight by their own partisans in the orgy of murder and cruelty that followed the discovery that the Commune could fight only as a rat fights in a corner. Human nature has not changed since then. In 1906 a Fabian essayist stood one May morning in the Rue de Rivoli, and found himself almost the only soul in the west end of Paris who dared appear there. The cultured inhabitants of that select quarter were hiding in their houses as before, with their larders full of hams and their baths full of live fish to provision them for a siege. There was much less danger of a revolution that day than there is of Primrose Hill becoming an active volcano at six o'clock this evening; and the purpose of the Government and its party newspapers in manufacturing the scare to frighten the bourgeoisie into supporting them at the general election just then beginning was obvious, one would have thought, to the dimmest political perspicacity. In the evening that same essayist, in the Place de la Révolution, saw a crowd of sightseers assembled to witness the promised insurrection, and the troops and the police assembled to save society from it. It was very like Trafalgar Square in 1887, when the same violent farce was enacted in London. Occasionally the troops rode down some of the sightseers and the police arrested some of them. Enough persons lost their temper to make a few feeble attempts at riot, and to supply arrests for the morning papers. Next day Society, saved, came out of its hiding places; sold the fish from its baths and the hams from its larders at a sacrifice (the weather being very hot and the hams in questionable condition); and voted

gratefully for the government that had frightened it out of its senses with an imaginary revolution and a ridiculous "complot." England laughed at the Parisians (though plenty of English visitors had left Paris to avoid the threatened Reign of Terror); yet in the very next month our own propertied classes in Cairo, terrified by the Nationalist movement in Egypt, fell into a paroxysm of cowardice and cruelty, and committed the Denshawai atrocity, compared to which the massacre of Glencoe was a trifle. The credulity which allows itself to be persuaded by reiteration of the pious word Progress that we live in a gentler age than our fathers, and that the worst extremities of terror and vengeance are less to be apprehended from our newly enriched automobilist classes than they were from the aristocracies of the older orders, is not a Fabian characteristic. The Fabian knows that property does not hesitate to shoot, and that now, as always, the unsuccessful revolutionist may expect calumny, perjury, cruelty, judicial and military massacre without mercy. And the Fabian does not intend to get thus handled if he can help it. If there is to be any shooting, he intends to be at the State end of the gun. And he knows that it will take him a good many years to get there. Still, he thinks he sees his way—or rather the rest of his way; for he is already well on the road.

It was in 1885 that the Fabian Society, amid the jeers of the catastrophists, turned its back on the barricades and made up its mind to turn heroic defeat into prosaic success. We set ourselves two definite tasks: first, to provide a parliamentary program for a Prime Minister converted to Socialism as Peel was converted to Free Trade; and second, to make it as easy and matter-of-course for the ordinary respectable Englishman to be a Socialist as to be a Liberal or a Conservative.

These tasks we have accomplished, to the great disgust of our more romantic comrades. Nobody now conceives Socialism as a destructive insurrection ending, if successful, in millennial absurdities. Membership of the Fabian

Society, though it involves an express avowal of Socialism, excites no more comment than membership of the Society of Friends, or even of the Church of England. Incidentally, Labor has been organized as a separate political interest in the House of Commons, with the result that in the very next Budget it was confessed for the first time that there are unearned as well as earned incomes in the country: an admission which, if not a surrender of the Capitalist citadel to Socialism, is at all events letting down the drawbridge; for Socialism, on its aggressive side, is, and always has been, an attack on idleness. The resolution to make an end of private property is gathering force every day: people are beginning to learn the difference between a man's property in his walking stick, which is strictly limited by the public condition that he shall not use it to break his neighbor's head or extort money with menaces, and those private rights of property which enable the idle to levy an enormous tribute, amounting at present to no less than £630,000,000 a year, on the earnings of the rest of the community. The old attempt to confuse the issue by asserting that the existence of the family, religion, marriage, etc., etc., are inextricably bound up with the toleration of senseless social theft no longer imposes on anyone: after a whole year of unexampled exploitation of this particular variety of obscene vituperation by the most widely read cheap newspapers in London, no Socialist is a penny the worse for it.

The only really effective weapon of the press against Socialism is silence. Even Bishops cannot get reported when they advocate Socialism and tear to pieces the old pretence that political economy, science, and religion are in favor of our existing industrial system. Socialist speakers now find audiences so readily that, even with comparatively high charges for admission, large halls can be filled to hear them without resorting to the usual channels of advertisement. Their speeches are crammed with facts and figures and irresistible appeals to the daily experience and money troubles of the unfortunate rate-

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payers and rent-payers who are too harassed by money worries to care about official party politics; but not a word of these is allowed to leak through to the public through the ordinary channels of newspaper reporting. However, the conspiracy of silence has its uses to us. We have converted the people who have actually heard us. The others, having no news of our operations, have left us unmolested until our movement has secured its grip of the public. Now that the alarm has at last been given, nobody, it seems, is left in the camp of our enemies except the ignorant, the politically imbecile, the corruptly interested, and the retinue of broken, drunken, reckless mercenaries who are always ready to undertake a campaign of slander against the opponents of any vested interest which has a bountiful secret service fund. This may seem a strong thing to say; but it is impossible not to be struck by the feebleness and baseness of the opposition to Socialism to-day as compared with the opposition of twenty years ago. In the days when Herbert Spencer's brightest pupils, from Mrs. Sidney Webb to Grant Allen, turned from him to the Socialism in which he could see nothing but "the coming slavery," we could respect him whilst confuting him. To-day we neither respect our opponents nor confute them. We simply, like Mrs. Stetson Gillman's prejudice slayer, "walk through them as if they were not there."

Still, we do not affect to underrate the huge public danger of a press which is necessarily in the hands of the very people whose idleness and extravagance keep the nation poor and miserable in spite of its immense resources. It costs quarter of a million to start a London daily paper with any chance of success; and every man who writes for it risks his livelihood every time he pens a word that threatens the incomes of the proprietors and their class. The quantity of snobbish and anti-social public opinion thus manufactured is formidable; and a new sort of crime—the incitement by newspapers of mobs to outrage and even murder—hitherto tried only on religious impostors, is beginning to be applied to politics. The result

is likely to be another illustration of the impossibility of combining individual freedom with economic slavery. We have had to throw freedom of contract to the winds to save the working classes from extermination as a result of "free" contracts between penniless fathers of starving families and rich employers. Freedom of the press is hardly less illusory when the press belongs to the slave owners of the nation, and not a single journalist is really free. We think it well therefore at this moment to warn our readers not to measure the extent of our operations or our influence, much less the strength of our case, by what they read of us in the papers. The taste for spending one's life in drudgery and never-ending pecuniary anxiety solely in order that certain idle and possibly vicious people may fleece you for their own amusement, is not so widespread as the papers would have us think. Even that timidest of Conservatives, the middle class man with less than £500 a year (sometimes less than £100) is beginning to ask himself why his son should go, half-educated, to a clerk's desk at fifteen, to enable another man's son to go to a university and complete an education of which, as a hereditary idler, he does not intend to make use. To tell him that such self-questioning is a grave symptom of **Free Love** and **Atheism** may terrify him; but it does not convince. And the evolution of **Socialism** from the **Red spectre** on the barricade, with community of wives (all petroleuses), and **Compulsory Atheism**, to the **Fabian Society** and the **Christian Social Union**, constitutional, respectable, even official, eminent, and titled, is every day allaying his dread of it and increasing his scepticism as to the inevitability of the ever more and more dreaded knock of the ground landlord's agent and the rate collector.

Now, as everyone knows, the course of evolution, in **Socialism** or anything else, does not involve the transformation of the earlier forms into the later. The earlier forms persist side by side with the later until they are either deliberately exterminated by them or put out of countenance so completely that they lose the heart to

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get born. This is what has happened in the evolution of Fabian Socialism. Fabian Socialism has not exterminated the earlier types; and though it has put them so much out of countenance that they no longer breed freely, still there they are still, preaching, collecting subscriptions, and repulsing from Socialism many worthy citizens who are quite prepared to go as far, and farther, than the Fabian Society. Occasionally they manage even to contest a Parliamentary seat in the name of Socialism, and to reassure the Capitalist parties by coming out at the foot of the poll with fewer votes than one would have thought possible for any human candidate, were he even a flat-earth-man, in these days when everyone can find a following of some sort. More often, however, they settle down into politically negligible sects, with a place of weekly meeting in which they preach to one another every week, except in the summer months, when they carry the red flag into the open air and denounce society as it passes or loiters to listen. Now far be it from us to repudiate these comrades. If a man has been brought to conviction of sin by the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, and subsequently enters the Church and becomes an Archbishop, he will always have sufficient tenderness for the Connexion to refrain from attacking it, and to remember that many of its members are better Christians and better men than the more worldly-wise pillars of the Church. The principal leaders of the Fabian movement are in the same position with regard to many little societies locally known as "the Socialists." We know that their worship of Marx (of whose works they are for the most part ignorant, and of whose views they are intellectually incapable) and their repetition of shibboleths about the Class War and the socialization of all the means of production, distribution, and exchange have no more application to practical politics than the Calvinistic covenants which so worried Cromwell when he, too, tried to reconcile his sectarian creed with the practical exigencies of government and administration. We know also, and are compelled on

occasion to say bluntly out, that these little sects are ignorant and incapable in public affairs; that in many cases their assumption of an extreme position is an excuse for doing nothing under cover of demanding the impossible; and that their inability to initiate any practical action when they do by chance get represented on public bodies often leads to their simply voting steadily for our opponents by way of protest against what they consider the compromising opportunism of the Fabians. There are moments when they become so intolerable a nuisance to the main body of the movement that we are sorely tempted to excommunicate them formally, and warn the public that they represent nobody but their silly selves. But such a declaration, though it would be perfectly true as far as political and administrative action is concerned, would be misleading on the whole. In England, everyone begins by being absurdly ignorant of public life and inept at public action. Just as the Conservative and Liberal Parties are recruited at Primrose League meetings and Liberal and Radical demonstrations at which hardly one word of sense or truth is uttered, but at which nevertheless the novice finds himself in a sympathetic atmosphere, so even the Fabian Society consists largely of Socialists who sowed their wild oats in one or other of these little sects of Impossibilists. Therefore we not only suffer them as gladly as human nature allows, but give them what help and countenance we can when we can do so without specifically endorsing their blunders. Fortunately the immense additions which have been made to the machinery of democracy in England in the last twenty years, from the County Councils of 1888 to the education authorities of 1902, have acted as schools of public life to thousands of men of small means who in the old days must have remained Impossibilists from want of public experience. One hour on a responsible committee of a local authority which has to provide for some public want and spend some public money, were it but half a crown, will cure any sensible man of Impossibilism for the rest of his life. And such

cures are taking place every day, and converting futile enthusiasts into useful Fabians.

A word as to this book. It is not a new edition of Fabian Essays. They are reprinted exactly as they appeared in 1889, nothing being changed but the price. No other course was possible. When the essays were written, the Essayists were in their thirties: they are now in their fifties, except the one, William Clarke, who is in his grave. We were then regarded as young desperadoes who had sacrificed their chances in life by committing themselves publicly to Socialism: we are now quoted as illustrations of the new theory that Socialists, like Quakers, prosper in this world. It is a dangerous theory; for Socialism, like all religions and all isms, can turn weak heads as well as inspire and employ strong ones; but we, at all events, have been fortunate enough to have had our claim to public attention admitted in the nineteen years which have elapsed since our youthful escapade as Fabian Essayists.

It goes without saying that in our present position, and with the experience we have gained, we should produce a very different book if the work were to be done anew. We should not waste our time in killing dead horses, however vigorously they were kicking in 1889. We should certainly be much more careful not to give countenance to the notion that the unemployed can be set to work to inaugurate Socialism; though it remains true that the problem of the unemployed, from the moment when we cease to abandon them callously to their misery or soothe our consciences foolishly by buying them off with alms, will force us to organize them, provide for them, and train them; but the very first condition of success in this will be the abandonment of the old idea that the unemployed tailor can be set to make clothes for the unemployed bootmaker and the unemployed bootmaker to make boots for the unemployed tailor, the real difficulty being, not a scarcity of clothes and boots, but a stupid misdistribution of the money to buy them. We should also probably lay more stress on human volition and less on economic pressure

and historic evolution as making for Socialism. We should, in short, give the dry practice of our solutions of social problems instead of the inspiration and theory of them. But we should also produce a volume which, though it might appeal more than the present one to administrative experts, to bankers, lawyers, and constructive statesmen, would have much less charm for the young, and for the ordinary citizen who is in these matters an amateur.

Besides, the difference between the view of the young and the elderly is not necessarily a difference between wrong and right. The Tennysonian process of making stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things is pious in intention, but it sometimes leads downstairs instead of up. When Herbert Spencer in his later days expunged from his *Social Statics* the irresistible arguments for Land Nationalization by which he anticipated Henry George, we could not admit that the old Spencer had any right to do this violence to the young Spencer, or was less bound either to confute his position or admit it than if the two had been strangers to one another. Having had this lesson, we do not feel free to alter even those passages which no longer represent our latest conclusions. Fortunately, in the main we have nothing to withdraw, nothing to regret, nothing to apologize for, and much to be proud of. So we leave our book as it first came into the world, merely writing "Errors Excepted" as solicitors do: that is, with the firm conviction that the errors, if they exist at all, do not greatly matter.

21st May, 1902.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE essays in this volume were prepared last year as a course of lectures for delivery before mixed audiences in London and the provinces. They have been revised for publication, but not recast. The matter is put, not as an author would put it to a student, but as a speaker with only an hour at his disposal has to put it to an audience. Country readers may accept the book as a sample of the propaganda carried on by volunteer lecturers in the workmen's clubs and political associations of London.¹ Metropolitan readers will have the advantage of making themselves independent of the press critic by getting face to face with the writers, stripping the veil of print from their personality, cross-examining, criticising, calling them to account amid surroundings which inspire no awe, and before the most patient of audiences. For any Sunday paper which contains a lecture list will shew where some, if not all, of the seven essayists may be heard for nothing; and on all such occasions questions and discussion form part of the procedure.

The projection and co-ordination of these lectures is not the work of any individual. The nominal editor is only the member told off to arrange for the publication of the papers, and see them through the press with whatever editorial ceremony might be necessary. Everything that is usually implied by the authorship and editing of a book has in this

¹ In the year ending April, 1889, the number of lectures delivered by members of the Fabian Society alone was upwards of 700.

case been done by the seven essayists, associated as the Executive Council of the Fabian Society; and not one of the essays could be what it is had the writer been a stranger to his six colleagues and to the Society. But there has been no sacrifice of individuality—no attempt to cut out every phrase and opinion the responsibility for which would not be accepted by every one of the seven. Had the sections been differently allotted, they would have been differently treated, though the net result would probably have been the same. The writers are all Social Democrats, with a common conviction of the necessity of vesting the organization of industry and the material of production in a State identified with the whole people by complete Democracy. But that conviction is peculiar to no individual bias: it is a Capitol to which all roads lead; and at least seven of them are represented in these Fabian Essays; so that the reader need not fear oppression here, any more than in the socialized State of the future, by the ascendancy of one particular cast of mind.

There are at present no authoritative teachers of Socialism. The essayists make no claim to be more than communicative learners.

LONDON.

December, 1889.

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