

can there be no greater difficulty in framing regulations to ensure the safe running of twenty trains a day over a line when they belong to twenty different owners, than when they belong to one owner, but it is actually and largely practised every day. Where several railway systems converge upon a common centre, it has frequently been found advisable, or even necessary, to give one or several companies running power over the line of a rival company which controls the only possible or the most advantageous approach to the terminal station. This is the case in New York, Chicago, London, and several other centres. The extension of this same system over the entire line cannot offer any insuperable difficulty. As long, however, as we neglect the adoption of this, the only natural system of railway management, the choice must lie between corruption and inefficiency. There must be monopoly in the carrying trade, whether belonging to the State or to private corporations, unless we distinguish between the ownership of the road and the running of trains, investing Government with the one, and throwing open the other to the beneficial influence of free and equal competition.

The Industrial Outcome of Socialism.

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That State-management of industrial undertakings is most inefficient and wasteful is so patent and universal that it has passed into a bye-word. This inefficiency arises from causes, which in their nature are permanent; from the monopolistic character of State-owned industries, excluding the invigorating influence of competition, from the absence of the stimulus which personal interest affords to the conductors of private enterprises, from the consequent slackness of supervision, and last, not least, from the methods of advancement, which necessarily place old and fossilised men in authority over the younger and more ardent ones.

The consequence of the co-operation of these factors is manifest even under existing conditions, when the industries managed by the State are few, and when those who conduct them are more or less stimulated to greater exertions by the contrast of

their own slackness with the greater enterprise and efficiency of privately conducted enterprises. Even now, the State-conducted industries are always the latest to adopt new methods or to avail themselves of new inventions. "I do not think railways are suited to France," said Thiers, when as Minister of Public Works he returned from an inspection of the infant railway system of England; and the great Napoleon declined Fulton's offer of the steamship, which, without doubt, would have given him incontestable supremacy. Similarly, to give a few examples only, breechloaders were used for many years by sportsmen before the military administration of any country ventured upon their adoption; Silver's governor for marine engines was used for years in private steamers before the Admiralty saw the necessity of doing likewise, and the neglect of all improvements and inventions in the telegraph service of England since its nationalisation, has become proverbial. The same neglect of new knowledge and means appears in the medical service of the State. That the use of lemon juice was an efficient preventative against scurvy had been known in the mercantile marine since 1593, yet it took the English Admiralty two centuries to adopt it, i.e., 1795; and the discovery of ipecacuanha as a specific against dysentery was similarly neglected by the military and naval authorities.

These instances could be multiplied a thousandfold. They show how the routine character of State-conducted industries prevents the adoption of improved methods and apparatus, till long after their efficiency has been proved. What, then, would be the fate of such new methods, discoveries and inventions, when all industries are conducted by the State, and when their success or failure cannot be tested, except at the hands of those who conduct these industries? Be it remembered, also, that Socialism strongly disapproves of the temporary monopoly which the State now confers on inventors, and that one of its proposals is to reward the inventors of efficient innovations by a State grant. Keeping in view the attitude of officialdom to innovations which disturb its routine, and its tendency to befriend some and persecute others—can anyone be doubtful as to the result? Corruption and stagnation would inevitably follow.

Not stagnation only, but retrogression. Whether we contemplate

the anarchic state of the industrial organisation at the beginning, or the despotism into which it would inevitably resolve itself, it is equally manifest that individual exertions must be relaxed. We have not yet arrived at such a state of moral development, that the average individual can be relied upon to work as hard and as efficiently for the benefit of the community as he would do for his own. On the contrary, the majority can be relied upon to work no more than is absolutely necessary, and to regard any one of their colleagues who works harder than they do themselves as an enemy and traitor. This tendency would develop to the utmost extent under the socialistic system, because there would be no apparent co-relation between individual effort and its reward. Not only would the production per head fall off in quantity, what is more serious still is, that quality would suffer as well. The more delicate machines could not be relied upon to work efficiently, because made and put together slovenly, and sooner or later they would be discarded. Instead of more machinery, less machinery would be used, and obsolete methods of work would again have to be reverted to.

The result of the co-operation of all these causes would be a gradual reduction in the production of wealth. Though the wealth produced might be more equally distributed—in itself a very doubtful proposition when the character of the bureaucracy is recollected—yet the time would inevitably come when the available amount would be insufficient to give to all as much as is enjoyed, even now, by the majority of the working classes. Even if all did get an equal share, that share would be too small to maintain any of them in even the most moderate comfort.

Socialism, the sacrifice of individual liberty and the establishment of the most far-reaching despotism, would thus defeat its object. Established for the purpose of giving bread to all, it would deprive the majority of a sufficiency of bread. Established to secure to all an equal share in the advantages of our civilisation, it would destroy that civilisation itself and place us all on a lower level of industrial development. All this must happen, because Socialism overlooks the manifest fact that men do not live by bread alone; that there are in human nature veins of weakness and veins of strength, the development of

which depends upon the surrounding conditions. Men are not sheep to be fattened at so much per head; nor wolves, who delight in tearing and killing each other. Freedom to use his faculties as suits him best; responsibility, that his well-being and that of his family depends upon the efficient use of these faculties; these have been the main factors in the past elevation of individual man. As no

society can be better than the average of the units which composes it, the same factors tend to the improvement of mankind as a whole. Absence of freedom, *i.e.*, compulsion to use his faculties in ways not suited to them, and absence of responsibility, *i.e.*, that his well-being and that of his family is unaffected, or only remotely affected, by the way in which he uses his faculties, are conditions which must

degrade the individual man and mankind as a whole. Socialism posits the latter conditions; it is therefore a system which, in spite of the good intentions of its advocates, which all are willing to allow, must degrade mankind, and must originate conditions far more disadvantageous, as well as far more difficult to remove, than those for the abolition of which it contends.

