

COMING INTO LINE.

WHICH WAY?*

*Root Remedies and Free Socialism versus
Collectivist Quackery and Glorified Pauperism.*

When "The Story of my Dictatorship" was published, some nine years ago, the author of this remarkable pamphlet denounced it in the "Clarion" as—"a tolerably plausible contribution, not to the flood of revolutionary progress, but to the backwash of reactionist propaganda." To judge from the present pamphlet, however, he appears not only to have read it, but to have greatly profited by it and other similar works; for his main position and chief contentions will be found almost identical with those of the "Single Tax" philosophy: though, of course, he clothes them in somewhat different phraseology. Hence it is, perhaps, that we can cordially commend this pamphlet, not as a plausible contribution to the backwash of reactionist propaganda, but as a timely and brilliant contribution to the flood of progressive thought. We can heartily congratulate Mr. Hall on its production, and extend to it a most cordial welcome, not only on account of its inherent and intrinsic merits, but also because we recognise it as a sign of the inevitable revolt, amongst the more sincere and intelligent of their erst followers, against what our author well terms the "Collectivist Quackery and Glorified Pauperism," embodied and advocated in the official political platforms of the "Clarion," of the Fabian Society, and of the Social Democratic Federation, which for so many years have been energetically foisted upon the people of this country as the only true and possible "Socialism." Hence we sincerely trust that this "Protest and Challenge," timely, vigorous, and manifestly sincere as it is, will obtain a wide circulation amongst the poor victims whose political education has been distorted and whose intellectual development has been thwarted by blind and unthinking worship of what Mr. Hall well terms—the staggering dogma of wholesale and retail State engulphment and "Industrial Conscriptio[n]," which have been commended to them, and which many of them had swallowed whole, under cover of that blessed word "Socialism," from which so many evidently derive as much spiritual consolation and political enlightenment as did the old village dame from that other blessed word "Mesopotamia."

However, as, according to Mr. Hall, "the term Socialism itself simply implies harmonious social relationships based on the industrial emancipation of labour, and on co-operative effort," we can all put in a claim to be considered Socialists, if we want to, even though we were to reject, as we do, all other Socialism save that advocated by Mr. Hall, ourselves, and those who think as we do. The following extracts will, we think, suffice to indicate to our readers, not only the tone and tenor of this brilliant little pamphlet, but also the identity of Mr. Hall's "Socialism" with the doctrines and aspirations monthly voiced in these columns, and to promote which this paper has been established.

Common Ground.

The common ground of all Social Reformers is well indicated by Mr. Hall in the following words:—

"The crux of the whole Social Problem—the main source of class poverty, class servitude and the bulk of vice and crime—is to be found in the economic subjection of those who labour by those who (legally but inequitably) appropriate the means and thereby control the fruits of labour. . . . All Socialists, then (including ourselves) 'are united by the basic and common claim that the exploitation of labour—the active factor which produces all wealth—must cease.'"

Yes, with this we are sure all our readers will agree; but as Mr. Hall well says—"The cleavage begins with the question, HOW? They will also cordially and entirely endorse his contention that "The State Collectivist's sincerity of intention and benevolence of heart must not be allowed to screen the visual obliquity and the spiritual 'throw-back' revealed in their quest for an answer." And also with his contention that "Collectivism is not Socialism."

Freedom or Slavery? That is the question.

Mr. Hall also succinctly and suggestively formulates the essential difference between his and our policy and the Official Socialist Policy in the following words:—

"The Official Socialist Policy aims at **protecting** the worker—and thinks that this can best be done by converting industrial society from a monster money-spinning mill into a monster governmental machine. The Liberationist Policy (which is our policy) on the other hand, aims at **freeing** the worker—perceiving that when he is free he will be able to protect himself, and that until he is free he will have nothing worth protecting."

He then continues, in words which remind us of many similar paragraphs in Max Hirsch's "Democracy versus Socialism," as follows:—

"The Collectivist denial of all option may spell equality—but it is the equality of a spiritless and spineless solidarity; perhaps an equality of riches in our purses, certainly an equality of poverty in what makes life best worth living: a body without a soul. Socialism (or at all events our *ism*) is not a mere struggle against penury, but an endeavour after a larger life. All other freedom rest upon and have no other safeguard than **economic freedom** (*i.e.*, the freedom to produce, and to exchange or to contract or co-operate with one's fellows on such terms as may be just and mutually agreeable). To deny the right of each to dispose of his own faculties and to what he can without violence or fraud produce by them—whether the denial be imposed by Trust bosses or by fellow-townsmen with votes—is to deny **all** right of person. . . . The true Socialist ideals are not a Glorified Pauperism, a National Barrack, or a Municipal Nursery—but Equity and Liberty, the two essentials to sound citizenship, and where Collectivist absorption and a mere majority of noses at the poll threaten to swamp instead of to widen personal and labour rights, we find ourselves in opposition, and *vice-versa*."

The Way Out.

"As I shall presently show beyond cavil, Free (and therefore practical) Socialism will first abolish masterdom and poverty by making the worker the master of the labour market under conditions under which the competition will be no longer for jobs to do but for men to do them, with a consequent progressive rise, right from the start, towards the full product wage, and then rational government would enforce direct State absorption only where private effort under **equitable conditions** proved injurious, incompetent or impracticable. . . .

"The qualities of self-reliance, individual responsibility, and personal independence should not only be permitted exercise by the State, but encouraged in every way. **All unnecessary denials of liberty are unjust denials of liberty. . . . The people are down, because the monopolists are on their backs—put them off and the people will get up.** 'A hair of the dog' is not the cure—it is flat quackery; for considered *per se* Government monopoly is not less objectionable than private monopoly—which is saying much, since at worst it could hardly be **more** objectionable."

* "WHICH WAY? Root Remedies and Free Socialism versus Collectivist Quackery and Glorified Pauperism. A Protest and a Challenge." By LEONARD HALL (Member of the Independent Labour Party). Price 2d. From the "Clarion" and "Labour Leader" Offices, and from J. J. Riley, "Guardian" Office, Southport.

Competition.

"Competition," he tells us, and the words will sound strangely familiar to many of our readers, "as competition is neither moral nor immoral. Its goodness or badness depends upon its **conditions** and upon its objects. . . . Present industrial ills arise **not** from **competition**, but from **monopoly**—the exclusive control by some persons of things that are essential to the life and liberty of all persons—from **privilege** that supplies nothing but command everything! And these two contradictory principles, competition and monopoly, so far from being allies in mischief, as many State Socialists seem to suppose, are homicidal enemies, mutually destructive one of the other. . . . Competition freed from monopoly possibilities, simply connotes effort, emulation, and therefore growth, variation, progress, and the general health." . . . "Competition under monopoly drives the weak (and frequently the strong) to the wall. Abolish privilege, and there will be no wall, and the weak will be a constantly diminishing quantity. . . . The fact of one producing more or better than another could not possibly deduct from the quantity or quality of the second's product! **It is not wealth, but poverty, we seek to abolish.** . . . We do not want more social coddling or more political governing. **We want more fair play and more free play.** Civilisation is languishing not for need of more restriction, repression, regimentalism, tin-god officialdom and red tape, **but for need of the eradication of artificial inequalities and the liberation of natural energies.**" All of which almost every one of our readers will, we are sure, cordially endorse.

The Bull's Eye.

"The labour question hinges upon the dependence of the worker for work, on somebody else's hire. If the worker could freely work for himself or in co-partnership with others, the labour question would be solved. Why can't he? Is it because a 'capitalist' has machines, or buildings, or stores of food or coin? Nay, for all these things are got and made and shifted about by the workers themselves. Capital makes no real advances to labour; what advance there is is from the labourer to the capitalist, for work precedes payment. No. It is because **all the opportunities** for labour are appropriated by exclusive owners of the raw materials—of the natural resources—**of the land**—said owners only permitting them to be used on their own terms as monopolists."

Monopoly, not Capital, the real Enemy of Labour.

"All Socialists agree in their recognition of the present tyranny of capitalism, but we freedomities (why didn't Mr. Hall say 'Single Taxers?') it sounds better, and means the same thing), differ in that we regard capitalism as an effect, not as a cause; as a branch, not as the tree of evil; and perceive that when the trunk falls, the limb will fall with it. That trunk has its tap-root literally in the earth itself. Labour and Land are the force and the matter of industry—the two essential factors for the production and distribution of wealth."

The One and Only Remedy.

"The key to open the storehouse is **socialisation of rent** (again we would ask why Mr. Hall does not say the Single Tax? it means exactly the same thing). I am in good company (yes, indeed, better than he even yet wots of). George Bernard Shaw, in *Fabian Essays*, p. 179, specifically declares that—"What the achievement of Socialism involves economically is the transfer of rent to the whole people." Parasites and obstructionists deposed, not only what went to them in tribute will then be added to the reward of industry, but thrice as much besides in added production. For what constitutes the **overshadowing economic import-**

ance of the Land Question is not what the landlords take from labour and enterprise, **but what landlordism prevents the workers and traders doing for themselves.**"

The Craven Attitude of Socialist Leaders.

"I have for long been amused," says Mr. Hall, how long? it would be very interesting to us to know, "at the terror and stupefaction which mark the attitude of the regular Socialist Leaders to the Land Question, and can only assume that they fear it because they do not understand it. (Hear! hear!) The general body of their followers are much more alive to the absorbing significance and comprehensiveness of its economic bearings. **The laws determining the control of the national domain must necessarily be the main factor determining the distribution of the wealth produced therefrom.** Just as such laws are equitable or inequitable, the distribution of wealth will be equitable or inequitable."

Inefficacy of other Reforms.

He then continues:—

"Whether one accepts or denies the affirmation that the right solution of the land question carries with it the whole solution of the labour problem, it must be patent to every mind at all competent to attack that problem that until and unless the land question is rightly settled—until the private appropriation of rent and land values is annulled—no other reform or attempted improvement can have more than merely tinkering and superficial results, nor lessen the tribute which industry has to pay to monopoly for the mere privilege of exerting itself. For the imperturbable law of private rent is that the effects of any measure aiming at softening (as distinct from freeing) the lot of the public will be wholly or mostly negated by the increased means of the rent-payers being absorbed automatically by the increased pressure of the rent-takers. And there is not a single factor in the nation's progress that does not add to the value of land."

The Effect of Real Radical Reform.

And towards the end of the pamphlet we find the following true and suggestive words, which we would strongly commend to the attention of all social reformers:—

"**The effect of rent nationalisation, then, would be, not it is true to socialise the ownership of all capital, but to socialise the use of all capital!**"

His Final Advice.

In conclusion, he contends that—

"The Independent Party itself could not do better than take its cue from the tactics of the Irish Nationalists. Just as the effectiveness of the Redmonite party arises from its knowing exactly what it wants and focussing its agitation on the fundamental thing necessary, so will the meaning of the Socialist Labour Party take strength and shape in the country's politics when it inscribes on its banner, in the prime sense in which the Irish have inscribed Home Rule on theirs, **'The Nationalisation of the Land.'**"

"**This is not the end, but it is incontrovertibly the beginning of reform!**"

We must really apologise to Mr. Hall for having quoted at such length from his pamphlet, which we do in the hope of making its merits known to those who will know how to make good use of it, more especially by circulating it amongst such of their Socialist friends who, unlike Mr. Hall, have not yet seen the whole of the ubiquitous Single Tax cat.

L. H. B.