Some Objectors to Socialism

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The humours of the objections to Socialism are often such as to make the thinnest of mortals "laugh and grow fat." The Socialist is often pulverised with the most startling and inconceivable question, and if he is not ready at a moment's notice to give a detail of the minutest workings of the New Society, he is told to "shut up" and speak no more about it. It does not matter to the half-starved, ill-housed, toil-worn workman that his lot will be much easier and his life more human under Socialism, unless you can tell him what provision will be made for "genius," and also if you will take his precious imaginary £2,000 from him.

The poor fellow always takes a strange delight in "supposing" that he has saved this sum. This £2,000 is a sort of "King Charles head" to him, and do what you like it *will* come up again and play the deuce with him. I have heard the figures going up to £30,000, but the average workman with eighteen or twenty shillings a week puts it at the more modest £2,000–it is only your "skilled" workman that goes for the very high figures! He is ready to lose the last drop of his blood on behalf of the fortune that he supposes he has "saved" out of his "own industry," and he will have nothing to do with the Socialists or Socialism unless he can get a *guarantee* that he will get leave to use his fictitious fortune in whatever way he likes. To hear him speak one would think that a glorious life of unlimited freedom had been his, instead of a life of the most abject and cruel slavery. He has been so successfully hypnotised by the clap-trap of the politicians, that he stares with unaffected astonishment at the Socialist when he is told that he is a slave. Yet there is hope for him too, for I have seen many like him taken out of their strange mesmeric state and brought back to the realisation of their miserable lives. When they are at last awakened they show no quarter to the politician, but make good go-a-head practical Revolutionary Socialists.

There is another class of objectors, and wherever one goes he is sure to turn up and put the question that is worrying the very life out of him. He is generally a little rickety and stunted, both in mind and body, and, alas! he will die without even having known what it is to live, supposing the Revolution were to take place tomorrow. He cannot for the life of him see how the "character of the individual" will be developed under Socialism, and is terribly afraid lest we should all lose "initiative" and grow into one mould of mediocrity. "But there would be no Individuality!" he keeps repeating, unconscious that the grey matter in his head can no longer "secrete *thought*," and that his poor wasted body will never know the pride of lusty physical life.

It is only Mahatmas and Rishis that can deal with this class. The ordinary Socialist feels the utter powerlessness of words, for alas! there is no reason left to appeal to. Karma is indeed hard on them, but who knows that in the next cycle they may be leaders in the great "revolutionary wave"!

There is another type of objector, and I think he is the meanest of all–barring, of course, the exploiters of Christianity. He is the "skilled artisan," the pride and pet of all the land thieves and water thieves. He has been hypnotised into the belief that both the great political parties exist only for him. He swells with pride when he thinks over the greatness of *his* country, and our wonderful superiority over all the "blarsted furriners." He cannot sleep o' nights for thinking landowner's words of praise, and how he has been patted on the back and told that he was the backbone of his country. He knows that the Socialists must be a poor lot indeed, for there is not a great lord or millionaire among them, and

he cannot even think of them without a strong feeling of contempt. He works from early morning till night, and is seldom out of work. His pleasures are few, because he has lost the faculty of enjoyment. He spends some of his little savings at the holiday time in a miserable house at the coast with his wife and family, and they wander listlessly about and weary for the end of the week, till the wife gets back to her drudgery and he to his factory or dim workshop. The tall chimneys belching forth their volumes of smoke and dirt are as welcome to him as the sight of the green fields are to the lover of nature. He feels no need for the pure air or the sunlight, and the clouds and the winds have no charm for him. He is "content," and, as he phrases it, he has never known what it was to "want a meal." All the selfishness in his nature is developed, and he has nothing but words of blame and abuse for all the unfortunates of our unsocial society. "It is all their own fault!" he exclaims, and draws his chair closer to the fire.

The middle-class politician who pats him on the back would cut his throat or drink a tubful of strychinine before *he* would lead such a life. His self-sufficiency is something astonishing, and his whole notion of the "proper thing to do" is to ape the fashions and do nothing that has not the sanction of Respectability. He will not be seen at any meeting that has not the approval of his masters, and he laughs at the ungrammatical speech of someone of his own class who endeavours, at the risk of losing his daily bread, to enlighten his shopmates to the causes of the miseries and poverty of their lives. He splits his sides with laughter at the idea of human beings living together in a state of mutual co-operation, and being strictly "religious" and "moral" he defends usury and all kinds of legalised thieving. His sympathies never travel beyond that of his family, and as a consequence he cannot understand the feeling of Brotherhood that in the New Society will overcome all wrong-doing by Love.

That this last type is by no means dead no one will dispute, for they are yet to be seen "starched to the eyes" at every meeting convened by either of the political parties, and he is ready to damn Socialism or even cheer it, if but the "noble lord" only says the word. His "convictions" are in the hands (or the heads) of his masters, and will in all likelihood remain there until machinery displaces him, or "bad times" throw him into the ranks of "surplus labour."

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