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# *The A B C of* **SOCIALISM**

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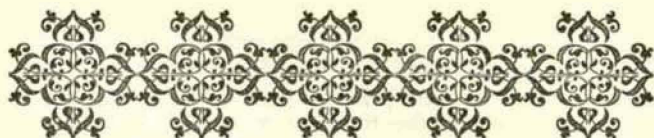
TWOPENCE

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY  
PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT  
14 GREAT GEORGE ST., WESTMINSTER

This pamphlet is the first chapter of "The Case for Socialism," in which book other chapters deal with SOCIALISM AND

CONFISCATION  
PERSONAL PROPERTY  
LIBERTY  
OFFICIALISM  
UNEMPLOYMENT  
WASTE  
LEVELLING DOWN  
HUMAN NATURE

*144 pages, paper covers, One Shilling; cloth covers 2/6, from all Booksellers and I.L.P. Publication Department, 14 Great George Street, Westminster, London. S.W.1.*



## *The ABC of Socialism*

NOBODY can exercise the rights of citizenship intelligently nowadays without clearly understanding the case for Socialism. At parliamentary and municipal elections, in every department of public affairs, the issues are defined, with constantly increasing insistence, in terms of Socialism and Anti-Socialism ; not only in the direct proposals put forward by Socialists themselves, but in the implications of the Socialist idea in the proposals of all political parties. And no vote can be an intelligent vote unless there is behind it a knowledge of the Socialist case and a reasoned judgment upon the Socialist idea.

The Socialist movement has passed beyond that ordeal stage which every new movement has to encounter, the stage of mere unreasoning prejudice and the unstudied use of epithets against it. Within the life of a single generation it has drawn to its ranks millions of earnest thinking men and women ; and it has made out its case so convincingly that in every civilised country its capture of the power of government is now the dominant issue in political conflict. It is sweeping on from strength to strength ; challenging the old order everywhere with confident boldness. Here in Great Britain its hands are already on the reins of government ; and there is manifest in the utterances of its opponents a bewildered sense of the futility of their efforts to stay its march to power. It claims to explain to the common man why poverty and squalor exist in a world of

abundant resources ; and the common man is everywhere finding in it the hope of fulfilment for his dream of human life set free from these miseries. In these circumstances, every citizen who wishes to keep intelligently abreast of the responsibilities of his citizenship must study the Socialist case ; and the desire amongst reasonable people for a serious study and understanding of it is now everywhere manifest. It is to meet this desire, to provide a statement of the essential teaching of Socialism, that this book is written.

In the first place, we Socialists believe that poverty can be prevented. The fact we ask you to begin by bearing in mind is that people are not poor in Great Britain because Great Britain is a poor country. We believe that the civilized world is able to produce enough wealth to give a high standard of life to all its people, if only that wealth could be got into the lives of its people.

Our first point, therefore, is that poverty is not inevitable ; that the resources of the world are sufficient to prevent it ; and that it could be prevented if only the nation saw clearly what it is that stops the wealth of the country from getting into the homes of the people and being available for the general life.

That may seem like a commonplace to you. But if you will think about it for a moment, you will see that it establishes a very real difference between Socialism and all other political ideas.

All other parties take the fact of poverty for granted, as being part of the natural and inevitable order of human affairs.

It is true that both Liberals and Conservatives put forward schemes of social reform intended to get rid of the extremes of poverty ; such schemes as those for old-age pensions, for feeding necessitous school children, for ensuring workmen against unemployment, and the like. That is all good so far as it goes ; but it does not touch the actual problem of the cause of poverty. On the contrary, it assumes that there will continue to be poverty to be relieved in these ways. These reforms are only proposals for giving

relief; and amount to no more than constantly baling out the boat while the leak which causes all the trouble is left untouched. The problem of poverty can only be effectively dealt with at its source—by stopping the leak.

What both Liberals and Conservatives take for granted is the broad fact of a rich class and a poor class continuing to exist; a population on the one hand living at ease with all the comforts of a spacious life, and a working population on the other hand living in small houses, with little leisure, and with incomes only at or about the margin of subsistence.

No political party other than the Socialist party has any idea of fundamentally altering that state of things. They are quite willing to give us reforms within the existing social order; and would be glad to see the poor class assured of regular work and wages good enough to go a little beyond the bare margin of subsistence; so that, for instance, working men might live in suburban streets of artisans' houses instead of in slums, have a little back garden to cultivate, work eight hours a day instead of ten or twelve, and even get a week or a fortnight for holiday in the summer.\* But the broad fact of a rich class and a poor class would remain; a small rich class with spacious lives and a large poor class with comparatively little. The notion of the other political parties is that practical politics are limited to such reforms as simply mitigate the extremes of poverty; the Socialist idea is that the national resources should be made available for the general national life, and that this class division, being in itself an evil and unjust thing, should cease.

When therefore, we Socialists say that poverty can be prevented, you will see that we mean by "poverty"

\* In precisely the same way, while serfdom existed there were all sorts of proposals put forward by humane people for relaxing the conditions of serfdom, making it less intolerable for the serf, while still retaining the institution of serfdom as part of the social order. What was wrong, of course, was not that the conditions of serfdom were too harsh and required to be modified, but that the institution of serfdom itself was unjust, and required to be abolished. The position with regard to private capitalism is precisely the same in relation to all this proposed reform within the existing order.

































