

## SOCIALISM IS IMPOSSIBLE.

The radical error of socialism is the assumption that there is some power in society above and beyond that of individuals of which society is composed.

Government and the State are described as independent political beings, entirely apart from the people.

Government ownership of railroads, nationalization of the means of production and industrial collectivism are phrases at once shallow, dishonest, and misleading. A nation is a voluntary association of individuals, and government is the agency by which its affairs are conducted.

The United States is a nation, and its Government consists of a president and the Congress, chosen by a majority of the voters, and judiciary, nominated by the executive and confirmed by the Senate.

Even the wayfaring man, though a fool, must know that it is impossible for the Government of the United States to own railroads, or the means of production, or to carry on the industries of the country. It has no power except that which is conferred by the people. The money in its treasury is contributed by the people. For its acts it is responsible to the people as a servant to his master. The power of a State is the aggregate strength of its inhabitants, as its wealth is the sum total of their possessions.

All the work of the human race since creation has been done by individuals, and progress has been greatest where

man has been most free. The inventions and improvements which have dignified humanity; the intellectual triumphs which have elevated and ennobled it; the heroism, virtue, and self-sacrifice which have consecrated it, are all the result of individual effort.

Destiny condemns the vast majority of men in every community to mediocrity. The few succeed; the many fail. The glittering rewards, emoluments, and prizes of life do not appear to be equitably distributed.

The race is to the swift; the battle to the strong. Fame, wealth, power, luxury, ease and happiness are to the multitude a mocking dream. Ninety-seven out of every hundred American citizens die penniless.

These are the advocates and propagandists of socialism. Their programme is the forcible redistribution of the assets of society. It proposes to substitute the tyranny of the mob for the tyranny of the monarch, and to take by force from those who have and give to those who have not; to obliterate all organic distinctions among men, and to confound the moral and intellectual limitations of the race. It is an attempt by human enactment to abrogate and repeal the laws of God.

The public ownership of railroads merely means that the majority of the people, who do not own them, shall take them from the possession of the minority, who do, by purchase, or theft, or confiscation, and have them operated by the "Government" for the benefit of the "State." The railroads of the United States have cost, perhaps, ten thousand million dollars, an amount more than five times greater than the entire money circulation of the country. How the "Government," being a pauper, is to pay this sum, except

by compelling its citizens to surrender their accumulations also, or how the "Government" is to maintain and operate them, except by precisely the same agencies through which they are now carried on, does not appear. Government is worst served than any other employer of labor on earth. It pays higher wages for less service, and the waste and idleness are incredible. The sense of personal responsibility in the employee is entirely lost, and although the majority receive more money than ever in their lives before, they continually complain of the stinginess of Congress, and intrigue for higher compensation, longer vacations, and unearned promotion.

It is not exaggeration to say that any one of half a dozen great railroad managers in the country, if allowed to carry on the Government as a private business is conducted, could pay the pensions, the interest on the public debt, support the Army and Navy, construct the public buildings, pay all salaries, maintain the diplomatic service, and carry the mails for 75 per cent of what it now costs the taxpayers, and make a great fortune for himself besides, every year. If Government can hardly conduct the limited functions it now performs, what would be the result of an attempt to control the complex interests of all social life under the management of those who had failed in the successful administration of their personal affairs?

The advocates of socialism are in the habit of pointing to the Post Office Department as an illustration of their theories, and of the tendency of States toward collectivism.

On the contrary, the mail service of the United States is a typical, burdensome, and irresponsible monopoly of the most offensive description. Beyond appointing a host of officials to

collect, pouch, dispatch, receive, and distribute the letters, papers, and parcels, the Government has nothing whatever to do with their transmission. They are conveyed by railroads, steamboats, stage-coaches, and private contractors at extortionate rates, some trains getting the entire cost of maintenance and operation from their receipts from the Post Office. The Government pays an average of 8 cents the pound for an average haul of four and one-half miles, while the express companies carry merchandise from New York to Chicago, a thousand miles, for \$3.00 per hundred pounds, and some transcontinental lines will take goods from New Orleans to San Francisco for 8-10 of 1 cent the pound; while Government, by law, compels the citizens to pay for carrying their letters at the rate of \$610 the ton. As a matter of fact, it is much nearer \$1,000 the ton, for very few letters weigh the ounce which may be taken for 2 cents postage.

And not only so, but the Government renounces all liability for the safe delivery of the property which it compels the citizen to intrust to its charge, except to the extent of \$10 when it is registered. And this is the basis upon which socialism would have all the business of the country conducted.

Any merchant who treated his customers as the United States treats its citizens in the postal service would be promptly adjudged a bankrupt and sent to the penitentiary. It cannot be denied that some aspects of individualism are not altogether lovely. Unrestrained competition has engendered a herd of moral monsters with the rapacity of the shark; the greed of the wolf, the cunning of the fox, the ferocity of the tiger, and the ingenuity of the devil.

But these socialism could neither banish nor destroy. No change in the social order can extirpate selfishness or

eliminate the evil propensities of man. These are beyond statute or ordinance. They can be reached only by conscience, and the reformation of the individual must come from within.

America has been the paradise and the nineteenth century the golden age of individualism. At no other place or time has the world offered richer prizes or freer field to capacity, courage, and intelligence. There have been errors and evils. Perfection is still remote, but there has been greater progress in science, in popular education, in the means of livelihood, in sanitation, in the means of communication, in the conquest over the mysteries of the universe, than in all the centuries that preceded. We have become the richest and most powerful nation because every man has been left free to be master of himself, to improve his condition, to obtain superior reward for superior merit.

And this vast material development has been accompanied by unprecedented activity of the moral and altruistic energies of the race. Never have religion, charity, and self-sacrifice done so much to alleviate human wretchedness or wealth been consecrated to nobler use. Colleges, universities, technical schools, offer free instruction to the humblest. Parks, galleries, and museums afford the means of recreation to the poorest. Hospitals for the sick, retreats for the infirm, asylums for the unfortunate, exemplify the Golden Rule, and justify the faith that the brotherhood of man is not an empty formula or a derisive fiction. Society is a fortuitous and accidental aggregation of individuals. Societies have done nothing in this world, nor ever will. The fundamental fact of Christian civilization is the immeasurable value of the individual soul.

Socialism is the final refuge of those who have failed in the struggles for life. It is the prescription of those who are born tired. It means the survival of the unfit, and the inevitable result would be degeneration. It would deprive ambition of its incentive, industry of its stimulus, excellence of its supremacy, and character of its reward.

Individualism would lift all to the level of the highest. Socialism would drag all down to the level of the lowest. Individualism is progress and life. Socialism is stagnation and death.