

Forced or Free

The Two Socialisms

J. William Lloyd

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THAT the drift of evolution is toward socialism few thinkers doubt. It appears in education, religion, industry, government, everything. All over the world free schools, free libraries, free reading rooms, etc., reveal a profound conviction that knowledge is a human birthright. In religion there is a rapidly accelerating tendency to waive dogma, leave creed to conscience, & concentrate on humanitarian work. Proposals to rub out sectarian lines & minimize sects are heard every day, and as a matter of almost unconscious fact such unity is every day being attained. Practically only some half-a-dozen sects remain, & these faded. And beyond this grows the desire to unite all sincere souls in a Larger Religion inclusive of all. In industry the growth of Trade-unionism on one side, and Trust companies on the other, shows how Socialism appeals to employee and employer alike, & is grasped by each in a dim & selfish way. In military affairs despite conquest-wars, immense armies, & formidable armaments, it is plain that the military spirit never had so weak a hold on the people before, its glamor was never so faint, its ghastly criminality never so apparent and revolting. Patriotism never before blinded the mass of men so little. Every one thinks of great wars yet, but the end of war seems at last in sight. In politics & government socialism shows continually in platform and placebo. Compulsory education, international postage, life-saving service, weather service, fire-fighting service, various municipal experiments, all reveal the socialistic bias. New Zealand is socialized, Switzerland partly so. And even the royalties are trying to combat the growing socialism of their subjects by vaccinating the body-politic with a serum of the same, suited to themselves.

Outside of this almost unconscious socialism is a steadily increasing avowed socialism among the masses, revealing itself in all sorts of sects and isms, in an ever-dying, ever-recurring crop of "groups," "colonies," communities, in cooperating stores and clubs, expressed thru hundreds of papers and thousands of pamphlets, books & public speakers.

From the fanatic terrorist with his bomb to the philosophical professor with his theory, socialism in some form touches every thinking man and leavens by action or reaction every form of modern life.

Socialism then cannot be ignored, it has come to stay, is potent for good or ill, and it behooves us to understand it, accept it, and direct it to surely serve.

Broadly defined it is the cooperation of all for the good of all, as opposed to the established system of exploiting all for the supposed benefit of a privileged few. Governments which pretend

to work for the general happiness are to that extent socialistic. State Socialism merely proposes to enlarge government to include & economically coordinate all human activity, that the greatest profits may be attained with least expense and fairest distribution to producers. It therefore has for its central thought an economic one – the wisest and most economical production and distribution of material goods to secure the greatest average material comfort and luxury. Free Socialism is the antithesis of this its central thought is a moral one. Character is its anxiety. It is of minor import, it insists, how a man is sheltered, or clothed, or fed, or carried from place to place, provided he is developing manhood, evolving high character & growing spiritually. Therefore while State Socialism thinks first about the majority, and is quite willing to sacrifice an individual for the majority's ideal, & seeks ever to control the individual to that end, the Free Socialist thinks first about the individual, his liberty, his encouragement and opportunity to be himself, his growth and forward march. State Socialism having attained its object of a perfect State, according to the average ideal, would rest stagnant there & check and hold back its advancing individuals, compelling them to conform. It would be a petrified world which only disruption could change. But Free Socialism would forever be urging its leaders on to new experiments, would praise every man in proportion to his originality and expression of self, and in all its parts would be fluent, progressive, growing, with glad & eager quest of new worlds of human life, even if some disorder, hardship and material waste did result from spiritual preoccupation and rapid forward change.

State Socialism's ideal is inclusive and perfected government, subordination of the individual to the majority and the average, equal luxury and comfort, and the perfection of the economic machine.

Free Socialism's ideal is equal & glad liberty for all harmless men, encouragement of individual variation, absence of all checks except those on repression & invasion, abounding opportunity for change, soul-growth and personal expression, & a Free Society of voluntarily cooperating, royally-individualized men.

State Socialism is materialistic & external.

Free Socialism is idealistic and moral.

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