

Individualism vs. Socialism

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Outline.

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Laissez Faire.

We get this word from the French - and it means literally "let alone." The term is applied to that manner of conducting a government in which the people are allowed to regulate their affairs with as little interference from supreme authority as possible. The first part of this thesis will be devoted to upholding laissez faire, while the last part will oppose it. Herbert Spencer has been one of my chief guides in affirming this subject, while on the other hand Socialistic literature has supplied data. Various causes will be traced out as to why such a term should become of such vast importance and also the results of this development.

In order to understand the complex we must first understand the simple and for this reason we will begin with the most simple form of civilization; viz, primitive man. The want of food has always been the great question and as it interests the

man of today with all the development the world has reached, so also was it a greater problem in the time of primitive man when he had no means of securing food but his bare hands. Doubtless then the only food known was such as could be easily procured as mussels and fish of various types.

Later man invented some rude way of securing game by some very simple device as probably a club or stone to kill this food. Here probably the food seeker had to hide himself somehow until the game came in his reach and then knock it down with his club or stone.

Next the savage found that it was easier and surer to keep flocks and see that they were fed. He could drive his herds from place to place without much trouble and was by this means brought into more or less contact with his fellow men. In this pastoral stage doubtless tribes and clans were formed and the herds were held in common. This is the first

stage in which laissez faire can be said to enter in at all because in the Hunting stage the means of living was so crude that no such thing as government could be thought of. The Pastoral stage naturally brings us into the

Agricultural. Man was able to conceive by this time that it took less effort to till the soil and stay in one place than to roam from place to place. In this stage the family first appears. Here probably, also began the division of labor in its most simple form. Here, too, the observation of the laissez faire principle becomes of more and more importance. This stage leads us naturally into the next higher, the Manufacturing.

In the age of manufacturing and giant industries the division of labor reaches its climax. Here the rights of different classes must be guarded and laissez faire becomes of highest importance. In this case as in all others the desirability of this law must be

established by experiment. We will now take up laissez faire affirmatively.

The first organized upholders of the laissez faire principle were the Physiocrats of France. They held that: I Gold is not an end of trade, but simply a means. II A nation in a long run cannot sell more than it buys and would not be benefited if it could. III All governmental monopolies and privileges relating to business and commerce are wrong. IV Trade both domestic and foreign should be free, state interference should be reduced to a minimum. V Tax should be direct and upon land only. They believed in natural law. They thought what is good for one is good for all. They seemed to overlook the fact that one individual can thrive at another's expense.

Opposed to this School we had the Mercantile School. This School held that: (1) money is a real form of wealth, (2) that in order to trade nationally the balance of trade must be held, (3) work mines (4) neglect agriculture, (5) and tax

imports. Their whole idea was centred in hoarding precious metals. While France led in this idea it was taken up more or less all over Europe. The idea is quite prominent today in nearly all nations as is often indicated in print by saying fortune is coming our way if heavy imports of gold are being made while ill fortune is connected with the exportation of gold. The greatest fault with this idea was narrowness; it was only one peculiar division in opposition to the laissez faire principle.

In opposing this question it is not my intention to take up any special type of Socialism, but will speak of the principle in a general way. Any one of the following heads would form a subject for a thesis in itself: Socialism of Owen, State Socialism, Bismarck International Socialism of Karl Marx, Christian Socialism of Maurice, or evolutionary Socialism in the Fabian Essays. We will take up simply the central idea in

this case as we did in the preceding.

The term Socialism has been connected with so many revolutionary schemes that it now commonly has joined with it a very destructive idea. It should not necessarily have any affinity for violence or confiscation but rather the opposite. In this discussion historical associations will be eliminated and the true principle advanced.

Laissez faire embodies the idea of Individualism. Opposed to this is Socialism. The Socialist holds that society is an organic whole, one individual is dependent on another and thus ~~all are~~ connected with each other; the Individualist on the other hand says it is a disconnected and warring body each working individually and for his own good only.

Co-operation means Socialism; competition Individualism. The one says Society should work for a common end and try to help all; the other affirms the idea of man versus man or work simply for your own good. Socialism

work for public welfare Individualism for private gain.

If all persons were equal in power and ability the two principles would lead to the same results. As life becomes more and more complex this problem increases in importance and the weak should be aided by the strong. The strength of the individuals decides the power of the whole body of society. If one is weak the whole of society is injured to that extent.

We will now consider briefly the development of Socialism. It truly begins at the time of the French Revolution. After this laborers demanded a new system. They called for all government in place of no government; they asked for their own rights to property and life and demanded they be not over-riden by the stronger financially. One of the first Socialistic steps was the foundation of the public school system.

In the industrial world Social-

ism has carried on its interference by constructing public buildings, public water ways, public roads, public charities, and in fact the government has become so cosmopolitan that it outranks all other individuals in this line. Becoming more detailed fifty four governments of the world own their own railways in whole or in part; while twenty do not. Sixty governments own their own telegraph systems while only six do not. Twenty five governments own their own savings banks and nearly all governments have some form of national banking. Thirty seven distinct industries are under governmental control representing so much Socialistic tendency.

Socialism has been developed unconsciously and without a single stop in its progression. The Individualist has held to his principle nominally only and has practised Socialism. "The common 'practical' man will be repelled by the mere mention of the name Socialism. This same

'practical' man will without wrging
walk the municipal pavements,
lighted by municipal light, washed
by municipal brooms using municipi-
pal water. Seeing by the municipi-
pal clock in the municipal market
that he is too early to meet his
children coming from the city
public schools, he hurries by the
county lunatic asylum and muni-
cipal hospital and will use the
national telegraph system to tell
them not to walk through the
municipal park but to come by
the municipal trainway to
meet him in the municipal wait-
ing room, by the municipal
art gallery, museum and library
where he intends to consult some
of the national publications in
order to prepare for his next speech
in the municipal town hall, in
favor of nationalization of canals
and increase of governmental con-
trol over the railway system.
'Socialism Sir' he will say 'Don't

waste the time of a practical man with your fantastic absurdities, self help for individual self help, that's what made our city what it is."

A good example of interference is shown in factory legislation of England. The cry of public opinion was strongly against this at first, but it continued to progress until now it has proved a great benefit to both employer and employed. Records show that the laborer does more in the short day than in the long and also the work is of a higher quality. By this factory legislation the health, morals and all that goes to make up civilization in general were greatly promoted. Schools were formed also which have done much and the growth has been gradual and constant.

Civilization clearly leads toward Socialism. If we oppose Socialism we are retrograding

towards primitive man. The Socialist does not wish to force his ideas upon the world unless it wishes to adopt them. He admits the following prophecy of Herbert Spencer: "The movement toward dissolution of existing social forms and reorganization on a Socialistic basis I believe to be inevitable." It must be a process of evolution rather than revolution and that we are right now travelling, in theory and in fact toward Socialism cannot be denied. We are living in a progressive world that is carrying us down the highway to fraternal government or more briefly Socialism.

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