

SOCIALISM AND SYNDICALISM

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Socialism and syndicalism by Philip Snowden

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PHILIP SNOWDEN

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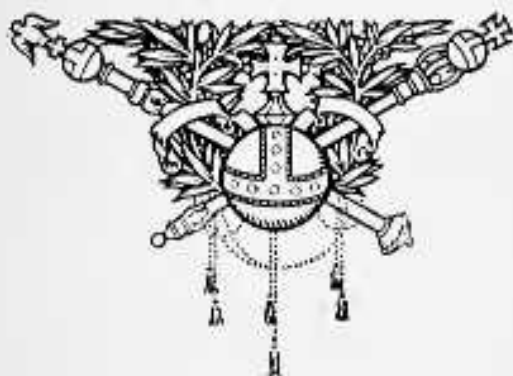


Philip Snowden



SOCIALISM
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by
PHILIP SNOWDEN, M.P.



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Socialism and Syndicalism

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL PROBLEM AND THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

THE Social Condition of the People is the dominating question of the age. In all the industrial countries of the world the problems of labour and capital, of poverty and wealth, and of the innumerable issues which arise out of the consideration of these subjects, are forcing themselves upon the attention of statesmen, moralists, religious teachers, and all who have any regard for their own interests or for the welfare of their fellows. In every Parliamentary country the Labour Question is constantly forcing itself upon the attention of the Legislature, and in an ever increasing measure the time of statesmen and politicians is devoted to dealing with industrial and social questions. Political parties compete with each other in offering proposals for solving the problem of poverty, and in all Parliamentary countries the election issues are practically confined to questions of industrial reform and social reorganisation.

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There have been times of great social unrest in the past, but never before has there been such universal attention given to the question of social reform, and never before has there been such widespread discontent with undesirable and undeserved conditions of poverty. A feature which distinguishes the unrest of the present time from former periods of disaffection is the extent to which the working-classes are assisted by innumerable organisations, composed largely of cultured and leisured people, formed for the purpose of scientific inquiry into the various aspects of the Social Problem. The Universities have been caught in the movement of the age, and both in their corporate capacity, and to a greater extent by the voluntary association of individual members, are making invaluable contributions to the general stock of knowledge upon economic and social questions. The Churches of all denominations have largely abandoned the former attitude of 'other worldliness,' and are realising that if that institution is to justify its existence, and to command the support of the democracy, it will have to concern itself with the social condition of the people, and will have to actively advocate such reforms in our industrial and social life as will permit men and women to develop their physical and moral faculties.

The revolt against the existence of degrading poverty and against the sordidness and ugliness of life is by no means confined to those who accept one explanation of the causes of the existing state of things. There are in all the advanced countries innumerable organisations and societies for reform, many of which exist to deal with one only of the many social evils, and even among such societies there are often different organisations holding widely differing views as to the nature of and the remedy for that particular evil. Though there is still a great lack of agreement as to the real character of the Social Problem, and an unfortunate absence of unity of action in dealing with it, it is in a measure satisfactory, and in a large measure hopeful, that the consciences of so many men and women of all classes are impressed by the need of reform in some direction, and are ready and anxious to devote themselves to such work. But there are abundant signs that, as a result of the experience gained in their work, those who have been long engaged in some reform movement of a limited or restricted nature, are rapidly beginning to see the essential unity of all social questions, and the futility of forcing reform in one direction without a corresponding advance of all the parts of the social mechanism. In another respect, too, a change has come over the