

**THE FABIAN SOCIALIST
SERIES, NO. 8: SOCIALISM
AND SUPERIOR BRAINS, A
REPLY TO MR. MALLOCK**

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The Fabian Socialist Series, No. 8: Socialism and Superior Brains, A Reply to Mr. Mallock by
Bernard Shaw

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BERNARD SHAW

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THE FABIAN SOCIALIST SERIES, No. 8

**SOCIALISM AND
SUPERIOR BRAINS**



THE FABIAN SOCIETY

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THE FABIAN SOCIETY consists of men and women who are Socialists, that is to say, in the words of its "Basis," of those who aim at the reorganization of society by the emancipation of Land and Industrial Capital from individual and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit. . . . For the attainment of these ends the Fabian Society looks to the spread of Socialist opinions, and the social and political changes consequent thereon. It seeks to promote these by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relation between the individual and society in its economic, ethical, and political aspects.

The Society welcomes as members any persons, men or women, who desire to promote the growth of Socialist opinion and to hasten the enactment of Socialist measures, and it exacts from its members no pledge except a declaration that they are Socialists.

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**SOCIALISM AND
SUPERIOR BRAINS**

A REPLY TO MR. MALLOCK

By

George BERNARD SHAW

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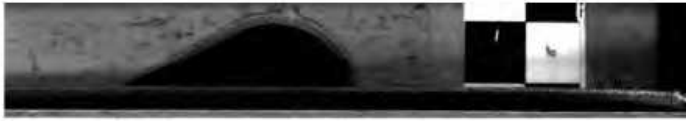
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SOCIALISM AND SUPERIOR BRAINS

PREFATORY NOTE

IN January, 1909, Mr. Keir Hardie delivered an address in which he pointed out that the remarkable increase in our national income, of which so much was being said in the controversy then raging between Free Traders and Tariff Reformers, had not been shared by the working classes, who were no better off than before. Immediately Mr. W. H. Mallock wrote to The Times accusing Mr. Keir Hardie of ignorance of political economy, on the ground that an educated man would have known that as the increase had been produced by the exceptional ability of the employers and inventors, there was no reason to claim any share of it for the employee class. Thereupon I lost patience with Mr. Mallock and wrote the following letter to The Times.



MR. MALLOCK'S IDEALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Mr. Mallock's controversy with Mr. Chiozza-Money over the figures of Mr. Keir Hardie may very well be left to the embarrassed silence in which good-natured people sit when a person of some distinction volunteers an absurd blunder as a contribution to a subject which he has not mastered. The notion that the people who are now spending in week-end hotels, in motor cars, in Switzerland, the Riviera, and Algeria the remarkable increase in unearned incomes noted by Mr. Keir Hardie have ever invented anything, ever directed anything, ever even selected their own investments without the aid of a stockbroker or solicitor, ever as much as seen the industries from which their incomes are derived, betrays not only the most rustic ignorance of economic theory, but a practical ignorance of society so incredible in a writer of Mr. Mallock's position that I find it exceedingly difficult to persuade my fellow Socialists that he really believes what he teaches. They regard me as a cynic when I tell them that even the cleverest man will believe anything he wishes to believe, in spite of all the facts and all the text-books in the world.

However, that is not the point that moves me to utterance on this occasion. If Mr. Mallock does not know the difference between the rents of land and capital and the "rent of ability"—if he is so ignorant of ordinary business and patent law as not to know that the cleverest inventor cannot possibly extract a farthing more from his invention than his stupidest competitor when it has been communicated 14 years after its registration—he must not expect the Socialists to educate him. My quarrel with him

is deeper than the technics of distribution. Mr. Mallock is preaching an ideal; and I want every gentleman in England to repudiate that ideal, whether he be Socialist, Individualist, Liberal, Free Fooder, Tariff Reformer, or Home Ruler.

The ideal is, not that the greatest among you shall be servants of all the rest, but that whenever one of us discovers a means of increasing wealth and happiness, steps should be taken to restrict the increase to the discoverer alone, leaving the rest of the community as poor as if the discovery had never been made. If Mr. Mallock does not mean this, he means nothing. If he does mean it, what does his University say to him? What does the Church say to him? What does every officer in the Army and Navy say to him? What does every Civil servant say to him, every statesman, every member of the humblest local authority, every professional man, every country gentleman, every man of honor, gentle or simple, who asks no more than a sufficient and dignified subsistence in return for the best service he is capable of giving to his country and to the world? This is not a question of the difference between the Socialist and the anti-Socialist: it is a question of the difference between the gentleman and the cad. Lord Lansdowne is not a Socialist, and Lord Charles Beresford is not a Socialist; but Lord Lansdowne has not asked for the hundreds of millions he saved Europe by making our treaty with Japan, and Lord Charles Beresford, if the German fleet attacked ours, would not refuse to conduct our naval defence unless the country were to be given to him as prize money when he had saved it. It is true that we have tradesmen—some of them in business on a very large scale both here and in America—impudent enough and base enough to demand for them-



8 SOCIALISM AND SUPERIOR BRAINS

selves every farthing that their business ability adds to the wealth of their country. If these *canaille* were surgeons with a monopoly of a capital operation, they would refuse to save a patient's life until they had extorted his entire fortune as a fee. If they were judges, they would sneer at a judge's modest £5,000 a year, and demand the total insurance value of the protection they afforded to society. If they were lifeboat coxswains or firemen, they would bargain for the kit of a drowning sailor or the nighty of a child in a burning house before they would throw a life-buoy or mount a ladder. They are justly despised by men of Mr. Mallock's profession and education; and when Mr. Mallock challenges the right of our workmen to a share in the increased product of industry by asking whether their labor "has become more productive in respect of the laborer's own exclusive operations," he not only lays himself open to the obvious counter-question as to whether the "exclusive operations" of our employers could produce anything more than the exclusive operations of our laborers, but, what is far more serious, he seems to be lending the credit of his reputation, his education, and the high social and intellectual prestige of his class to the most abandoned sort of blackguardism that is still outside the criminal law.

It is fortunate for us that few of our tradesmen are so vile or so silly as the commercial theory by which theorists attempt to justify them. The man who has "made" £20,000 a year for himself knows very well that his success does not afford the smallest presumption that his services have been more important than those of a police-constable with 24s. a week. He does not dream of posing as the superior of the captain of a battleship with a modest income of three figures. Mr. Carnegie "divides up" his