

BERNARD SHAW AS A FABIAN SOCIALIST

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PREFACE

No British author, except Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde, is as well-known as George Bernard Shaw in China. His name rings a bell of great dramatic achievement as well as wit in the ear of a Chinese student with a minimum knowledge of English culture. Some of his plays have been translated into our language, and the present writer's first experience of reading Shaw was his Arms and the Man in Chinese. But Shaw was and is a rather unfamiliar figure on the Chinese stage. Shaw's plays have not been put on the stage in Chinese in the past ten or fifteen years in Hong Kong. And Shaw's philosophy and social aspiration remains obscure to the majority of the Chinese reading public.

Unique among English writers, Shaw had personal relations with some Chinese men of letters. Mr. Sheung Shih-I, a Chinese writer in English, contributed a humorous account of his friendship with Shaw in G.B.S. 90 on the occasion of the latter's birthday. When in 1933 Shaw was touring China, the conservative clique of literary men in China turned a cold shoulder to him, but he was warmly welcomed by the left-wingers. They praised his satires on society in a general appreciative manner. At the time of Shaw's centenary in 1956, this Irish genius was commemorated both in mainland China as well as in Hong Kong. The commemoration in Hong Kong was languid and unnoticeable. There was no occasional Chinese criticism of Shaw or his work. His socialist activities were completely ignored.

In the case of Shaw as a Fabian, the reasons were perhaps obvious. The academic circle in Hong Kong has been trying its best to

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hush up the scandal of his socialism. Owing to the drastic political changes in China in the past decade or so, in the very word of Shaw, socialism "stinks" in the nostrils of the Chinese people in Hong Kong. Besides, popular interest in a foreign author is not deep enough to lead the publishers to publish specific studies on his literary work, not to mention his socialism.

But this neglect of Shaw is particularly deplorable. Chinese students of English literature have overlooked a very important aspect of Shaw's development as a dramatist and writer. To disregard Shaw in his formative years when he trained himself in the science of economics and the art of speech is a grievous mistake. For the public in general, because of lack of introduction, has missed an excellent guide and teacher of social amelioration who offers to us a policy of great sanity.

Although Shaw was criticizing British society in particular, his diagnosis is actually applicable to societies outside of Great Britain which are in the process of industrialization. Shaw centres his attention on the basic human vices let loose in a society without governmental restraint in transition to a better organized welfare state. Even though incidents may vary in degree under different circumstances in different societies, yet in dealing with poverty, prostitution and exploitation, one feels that Shaw's criticism and diagnosis are universal, for Shaw is tackling the fundamental problem of human nature, its weakness and its capability of improvement.

CHAPTER I

PROBLEMS OF THE AGE

The towering fame of George Bernard Shaw as a dramatist in the twentieth century, the general impression of Shaw's dominant contribution to the Labour Party in England, which won the 1945 General Election, and finally, his death in 1950, at the ripe old age of 94, tend to eclipse his deep relation to the Victorian Age, when Shaw in his early nonentity, joined the Fabian Society in 1884, trained himself in the art of speech, armed himself with the proficiency of economics, and fought for the cause of social reforms. Shaw often said that economics to his plays was like the science of anatomy to Michaelangelo.¹ As a Socialist, Shaw was very much indebted to writers and social reformers like Carlyle, Ruskin and Henry George. In the field of economics, he was influenced by Jevons, Ricardo, and, to a certain extent, Karl Marx. They are some of the main shaping forces of Shaw's reaction against the status quo.

As a branch of Socialism, peculiar to English history and political constitution, the Fabian vogue tended to be rather short-lived. The Fabian Society, established in 1884, began to exert active influence on English political and social scenes in the last decade or so of the nineteenth century. After 27 years of service, the Fabian Old Guards, like Shaw and the Webbs, resigned in 1911 from their posts of leadership to make room for new blood. The Society, however, "did

1. See "Bernard Shaw at Eight," by Edmund Wilson, from George Bernard Shaw, ed. by Louis Kronenberger. Cleveland, The World, 1953, p. 140.

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not come fully to life again until quite recent years as a constituent of the new Labour Party,...."¹ Looked at in this way, a resume of the social and political fermentation of the Victorian era will be useful, because this will illuminate the background of Shaw's political thinking, and particularly his activities and contribution as a Fabian Socialist. Moreover, the inspiration that the Victorian thinkers and political situation had on Shaw will help us to gain a proper perspective of Shaw's relation to his 'age' - an age of transition and formation astriding two different eras.

Against the background of poverty in the rural areas, and industrial discontent in growing towns and cities, England in the 1830's saw a series of riots and struggles of the businessmen, workers and labourers fighting for political rights and expressions. "Turmoil, upheaval, even revolution," as Sir Winston Churchill puts it, "seemed imminent, instead there was a General Election."²

The first Reform Bill was introduced in 1831 by Lord John Russel in the hope of abolishing and replacing a list of over one hundred "rotten" and "pocket" boroughs with new constituencies for unrepresented uprising industrial and commercial districts, such as the North, the Midlands, and the Metropolis. To the Tories, an arithmetical distribution of seats, and a more uniform franchise were dangerously akin to French democracy. A reform of this kind meant to them a

1. Bernard Shaw, (and others). Fabian Essays. Jubilee Ed. London, Allen & Unwin, 1948, p. 209.

2. Winston Churchill. The Great Democracies. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1958, p. 44

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headlong jump into chaos. They could not appreciate the Liberal's farsighted proposal to forestall revolution. Rioting, dissolution of governments, and wild disorder in the Midlands and other industrial areas slowly taught the Peers to accept, however reluctantly, the hard facts of reality. After the first Reform Bill had been introduced and defeated for the third time, the tidal wave of menacing feelings in the country forced the passage of the Bill in 1832.

Thus, the middle class had secured its privileges of suffrage. The proletariat, which had fought along with the middle class as allies, was rewarded with disenfranchisement. However, the experience of the First Reform Bill was a lesson to Victorian England in a number of ways, and this may be seen in relation to the subsequent Chartist Movement from 1839 to 1842. Beset by four years of bad trade, bad harvest, disease, and unsanitary towns,¹ the furious proletariat rose against the ruling class and demanded a thorough democratic reform. As the agitators did before 1832, the Chartists held that an extension of franchise would salve the people's misery. The motive and character of this movement was, therefore, mainly social. For a time, England was overwhelmed with petitions and pamphlets. The working classes employed their powerful weapon of strike. However, the Chartists were doomed to fail. Their demands, such as universal male suffrage, equal electoral districts, and so on, were perhaps too advanced for their age to

1. E. Bathos. The Victorian and After, 1830-1914. 2nd rev. ed. London, Gresset, Press, P. 129.

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swallow. Moreover, their only hope of success lay in procuring the support of the parliamentary party and the advanced members of the middle class. Being highly class-conscious, the Chartists refused to bid for middle class support. Meanwhile, improved conditions, such as the Rail Boom and better trade and so on, seasonably set in, and thus helped to cool the public temper. Nevertheless, Chartism had its influence on Parliament, which was now "a more sensitive barometer to outside opinion than of old." Such influence may be seen in the "accelerated passage" of Factory Acts, Corn Law Repeal, and the first "belated" Public Health Act of 1848.¹

The New Poor Law, which was introduced in 1834, was an important step in social organization with a view to depauperize the labourers in South England, and also to restore their self-respect and self-dependence. Inside the workhouses, life was deliberately made more horrible and unpleasant than the outside hurly-burly of hectic competition. The commissioners of the New Poor Law were alarmed at the pauperizing effect of the old system on the poor, yet it was very unfortunate that, in so doing, the middle class had uprooted the last refuge of the workers. As Sir George Macaulay Trevelyan put it:

When out-door relief was the means of livelihood to many thousands in town and country, it was terrible to cut it all off at one stroke, without at the same time enforcing a living wage, or supplying any shelter for the unemployed and their dependents except the workhouse.²

1. See George Macaulay Trevelyan. History of England. London, Longman, 1929, p. 642.

2. Ibid. p. 641.

The grim horror within the walls of the workhouse prompted Charles Dickens' moving novel Oliver Twist. No matter how praiseworthy the intention of the makers of the New Law may have been, one is inclined to agree with Bernard Shaw, who made the following remarks in relation to it, that "All attempt to mitigate Individualism by philanthropy instead of replacing it by socialism are foredoomed to confusion."¹ This led to the rapid organization of the Trade Unions as means of self-protection on the part of the labourers.

In 1866, when Gladstone first moved the motion of the Second Reform Bill, the discontented Liberals joined hands with the opposition Conservatives to turn down this very moderate measure of enfranchisement, on the ground that the wage-earners were morally as well as intellectually inferior to the bourgeoisie. The working class was roused to fury. Trade Unions were united with the middle class in monstrous outdoor demonstrations. Disraeli took over the collapsed Liberal Government at the rejection of the Second Reform Bill. Facing the nation in ferment, Disraeli sought to appease public emotion by carrying out a much stronger measure than the previous Liberal proposal. Household suffrage in the boroughs was thus achieved through this Second Bill of 1867.

With parliamentary reforms and extensions of enfranchisement, Great Britain was drawing nearer and nearer to social democracy. Five of the six points the Chartists demanded were granted in the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884. The Third Reform Bill was the major achievement of Gladstone's second ministry. Strong opposition in the House of

1. Fabian Essays, p. 171.

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Lords and the ensuing popular demonstrations were effectively summed up in the phrases "Peers against the People" and "Mend them or end them," coined by Chamberlain and Morley respectively.¹ People won the cause and household suffrage was now extended to county electoral districts. "The Individual for the first time became the unit, and numerical equality ('one vote, one value') the master principle."²

Behind this scene of political commotion was a movement of general growth and amelioration in various fields of social organizations from the year 1870 onward. Education was at last made universal. Sanitation and paving and lighting of streets absorbed municipal attention. And this period also saw the beginning of slum clearance. The Civil Service had been undergoing a series of transformations since 1868. Modern services and institutions were reinforced by the pick of the universities through public examinations. Their quality was thus greatly improved. Toward the end of the century, Victorian England was equipped "for the first time with a complete modern framework for localized administration - democratic, flexible, [and] passably honest..."³ The Civil Service was fully prepared to tackle social and other imperial problems in the time to come.

Contemporary thinking and literature bear the imprint of the era. Or more truly, perhaps, the influence was a two-way traffic. Utilitarianism, in the hands of John Stuart Mill, was liberated from

1. R.C.K. Ensor, England, 1870 - 1914. Oxford, University Press, 1952, p. 88.

2. Ibid., p. 88

3. Ibid., p. 303

the stricter bonds of the laissez-faire theory, and exerted a wide influence over the thinking and education of the time. He advocated a thorough democracy in which every man and woman should participate in national as well as in local elections. He understood the limits of a democratic government, and he would have liked to see a democratic state guided by the hands of specialists. "Power" said Mill, "may be localized, but knowledge to be useful, must be centralized."¹ He preached for women's rights and their proper education, and helped to build up the respect for women's personal liberty. Credit must also be given to Mill for petitioning in his essay "On Liberty" for freedom of thought and discussion, which was limited by the social conventions of the time. Except for the difference in education, for which Shaw had great contempt, Shaw was very much in favour of a centralized, expert government.

In Victorian prose literature we feel the full impact of the age with its political anxieties and social aspirations. Perhaps a little too controversial in his activities, William Cobbett, nevertheless, was an unmistakable champion of the labourers of rural England and a hostile critic of the Industrial Revolution with, sometimes noisy invective. In Cobbett, we first find a tendency to use statistical examples of and arguments against industrial England, which savored of the Fabian Webbs. His prose, as may be seen in *Rural Rides*, is charged with a love of the Middle Ages and the unsophisticated rustic people.

1. Trevelyan, History of England, pp. 677-8.

But Cobbett was also very practical: he held that work is a sacred trust. He took issue with the Christians that poverty is bliss, yet he maintained that morality is undermined by the two extremities of wealth and poverty. His prose is direct, forceful and utilitarian. He aims at communication with the larger low-brow public. He even edited an English Grammar for the illiterate. His activity is that of a social reformer.

Thomas Carlyle was another prophet of work. The solution of the age, as Carlyle saw it, was far from being an extension of franchise. Even though he was a champion of the poor, and highly suspicious of aristocracy, Carlyle vehemently objected to Chartism in 1840 out of basic distrust of democracy. He attacked the mass movement and held it mobocracy and anarchy. In fact, one wonders whether democracy is synonymous with anarchy in his vocabulary. The poor should rejoice in their work, so says Carlyle. It is a sacred duty, and this led to his attack on the government's inability to provide sufficient jobs for the people. He jeered at the ideas of votes and Free Trade. The former, he pointed out, suffered at the hands of treacherous politicians, whereas the latter was shown strikingly in the phrase of "'Free Racing, ere long with unlimited speed, in the career of Cheap and Nasty.'"¹ Contemporary England in his eyes was pushed by the series of reforms into the "Niagara rapids."² The only solution was trust in the advent

1. Charles Frederick Harrold, and William D. Templeman, (ed.) English Prose of the Victorian Era, New York, Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 250.

2. English Prose of the Victorian Era, p. 251

of the true heroes. His ideal society was a classed society: the toil-worn craftsmen, under Carlyle's classification, should be the followers of the toilers. Both of the classes are inspired by the doctrine of work. It is a form of pseudo-feudalism. Shaw, though subscribed to the practice of a voting democracy, became increasingly impatient with the incompetence of the voting mass, and the parliament as a political machine. He came to the conclusion of a specialists' government. The two-party system should be transformed into an advisory body like the municipal councils. He also came to hold that people should undergo an examination before they are qualified for franchise. In the course of a century from the Chartist Movement to the publication of Shaw's Everybody's Political What's What, in 1944, he was able to envisage a practical programme to remedy the weakness of a democracy, much more so than Carlyle.

As a social prophet, John Ruskin not only advocated the gospel of socialism and denounced machinery and material progress, but also tried to carry out some of his social ideals. One is impressed by Shaw's homage and frequent references to Ruskin. The famous saying of Ruskin on "wealth without work is theft" is often repeated, though in various manners, in Shaw's own writings.¹ In reaction to contemporary economists, like Ricardo, Ruskin heroically stated that "there is no wealth but life." He saw in machinery and the Industrial Revo-

1. See George Bernard Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What? 2nd ed. London, Constable, 1945, p. 144; and, The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism. Garden City, N.Y., Garden City, 1928, p. 466.

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lution a menace to simple dignity and beauty in men's relationships. A healthy society is to be achieved through a well-balanced development of life itself, and that in turn cannot be reached without the appreciation and practice of art. He therefore undertook some reform projects, and his purpose in establishing the St. George's Guild deserves a brief comment here. In order to cultivate the moral and aesthetic well-being of the working men, Ruskin set out to teach them the world of art and beauty. As the estates of the Guild were to be run on aristocratic rather than communist principles, the working man should strive to rise within his own class. The aristocracy Ruskin envisaged was one of brains and taste. In Unto This Last, Ruskin lashed at Ricardo's laissez-faire theory, and stated his views on a classless civilization. The planned society of the present day is much indebted to this book.¹

Although Ruskin primarily addressed the working class, especially in the latter part of his career, Shaw, however, was equally, if not more, interested in his appeal to "the educated, cultivated and discontented." High tribute is paid to the Ruskinite by Shaw, for he says, the former is the "most thoroughgoing of the opponents of our existing state of society."²

William Morris, like Ruskin, was inspired by Beauty and Art in his political economy. He and Ruskin will long be remembered for con-

1. See Joan Evans, John Ruskin, London, Jonathan Cape, 1954, p. 419.

2. George Bernard Shaw, Platform and Pulpit; ed. by Dan H. Laurence. London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962, p. 132.

tributing to England the kind of socialism which draws inspiration from the beauty of ancient civilizations and of the Middle Ages. In so doing, they succeeded in shaping a socialism which forsakes revolutions and bloodshed, and which is peculiarly English. Morris saw in the medieval world beauty and virtue far greater than the industrialized, meanwhile cruelly competitive, England of his time.

The thought of a classless civilization brings us to Matthew Arnold, for culture, to him, "seeks to do away with classes," and with all artificial forms of "inequality." He desired, therefore, some sort of socialism ultimately, and believed that future control of England would be in the hands of the proletariat. Thus, it was an urgent task of the age to enlighten and educate the working class.¹

The feeling for social reform was the core of most of the novels by Charles Dickens. He was an optimistic and ardent believer of progress. With criticism and ideals wrapped up in the sweet coat of art and sentimentality, Dickens effectively battled the threatening utilitarian tendencies of contemporary England. The cruelty of the Poor Law and the workhouse system, as has been mentioned before in passing, was portrayed in Oliver Twist. The cold, hard treatment of children, and the sinful exploitation of their labour, the dehumanizing effects of harsh laws and the penitentiary system was vividly depicted in David Copperfield, Great Expectations, and in a number of other novels.

Despite his sympathy with the ethical standards of the

1. Walter Jackson Bate, "Matthew Arnold" In Victoria Literature. ed. Austin Wright, New York, Oxford University Press, 1961. p. 65.

middle class businessmen, Dickens changed his view at the mid-point of his career as a novelist. In Dombey and Son, 1847-8, Dombey, the symbol of the Victorian theory of free trade and middle class social standards and conscience, was presented as selfish, smug, and cold-hearted in his business transactions and family life. The uprising Victorian businessmen, Dickens found, were just as indifferent to social evils as the idle aristocrats, with whom they began to intermingle through marriage.¹

Such were the efforts of the Victorian thinkers and writers to change a thought-climate of smugness and to open up to the public the tragic reality of industrial England. They realized the urgency of evolving social reforms. Thus Victorian England won another bloodless revolution in English history through literary efforts on the one hand and social and parliamentary reforms on the other.

It was in this intellectual and political milieu that Shaw, who was born in 1846, grew up and matured. The same is true of the Fabian Society which was founded in 1884. Shaw's political and social experience first found expression in his political writings, and later in his plays. Shaw maintained that the prefaces of his plays serve the purpose of social propaganda. To Shaw, the gradual extension of franchise and social reform since the First Reform Bill was a manifestation of gradual transition to social democracy. With regard to this series of social efforts, Shaw remarked in his essay on "transition" in the Fabian Essays, that "we are already far on the road [of socialism]..."²

1. Victorian Literature, pp. 130, 141

2. Fabian Essays, p. 171

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In this light, we may well say that the Fabian theory of "gradual inevitability" is an exemplification of historical continuity since the 1830's; and Shaw himself carries on the Victorian tradition of Carlyle, Ruskin and Dickens in shaping a socialist thought-climate. In the following chapters, the present writer proposes to examine Shaw's activities as a Fabian Socialist, his teaching, and the methods he uses to spread them. Because this thesis is written for the Department of English, rather than that of History or that of Political Science, the stress will be on Shaw's communication techniques.

This first chapter was not meant to be an exhaustive treatment of the age. It was intended rather to serve as a reminder so that the reader would be better able to place Shaw in the proper Victorian setting. As has been mentioned, the fact that Shaw lived well on into the twentieth century sometimes leads us to forget that Tennyson and Browning were still publishing when Shaw himself began to publish. In other words, Shaw's thinking, background and formative influences are frequently more Victorian than modern.

CHAPTER II

COMRADES AND OPPONENTS

The general intellectual situation of the early 1880's was one with a wide gap existing between the younger and older generations. Young men of the time lost their faith in their fathers as guides in matters of science, religion and philosophy. Looking at Society with the fresh eyes of youthful ideals and integrity, the younger generation was quickened by the wish to reform the conditions of poverty and unemployment. The political parties failed to attract them; Karl Marx did not succeed in making any impression on them in those years of social agitation. And there was no English translation of Das Kapital at the time. Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Federation, published England for All in 1881, which was the first presentation of Marx's ideas in English, yet there was no mention of Marx's name. Guided rather by the true spirit of the British people, the young reformers sought to carry out their fresh standards of common fairness through diverse channels by establishing new organizations.

Thomas Davidson (1840 - 1900), who was known as the "Wandering Scholar" and who had participated in the Scottish Labour Movement, settled in London in 1883, and gathered around him a group of young men searching for the possibilities of communal living and the conditions of good life. This was known as the "Fellowship of New Life." But Davidson soon left for the United States of America. Lacking the central personality of Davidson, the members soon split into several different groups.

However, a group of five people stuck together. Edward R. Pease, Frank Podmore, Hubert Bland, F. Keddle and J.H. Watts founded the Fabian Society in January, 1884. They were unknown intellectuals and most of them had no direct contact with the Trade Union Movement at the time. Nor did they possess any distinct body of political thought, least of all, a definite policy. Nothing was there to indicate that the Society would escape the fate of oblivion shared by so many other random organizations of discontented intellectuals with the best intentions of social improvement. There was not the slightest indication that this Society would ever play a part in English political life. The beginning, therefore, was one of great uncertainty, save that these young men were moved by a passion to promote social conditions.

The name of the Society, to quote F.H. Underhill, "was a stroke of genius."¹ The very use of Fabius as the name summarized the will to take time in working out a more specific programme of social reformation, and the will to work out a right method and policy. The mottoes, produced by Frank Podmore, a self-educated workman, expressed this essential spirit:

"Wherefore it may be gainsaid that the fruit of this man's long taking of counsel - and (by name so deemed) untimely delay - was the safe-holding for all men, his fellow citizens, of the Common Weal."

"For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently, when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard as Fabius did, or your waiting will be vain, and fruitless."²

1. Frank H. Underhill, "Fabian and Fabianism," Canadian Forum, March, 1946, p.

2. See Edward R. Pease, The History of the Fabian Society, New York, Dutton, 1916, p. 39.

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Although the mottoes were printed as quotations, yet they could not be found in any history book. And H.G. Wells, among others, pointed out that this historical allusion to Fabius was actually a mistake, for the Roman general never really took any military action; it was Scipio, rather, who struck and smashed the Carthaginian invasion.

In May 16, 1884, four months after its foundation, the Fabian Society was reinforced by the recruitment of George Bernard Shaw. In the minute-book we find the following entry in Shaw's own writing under that date: "This meeting was made memorable by the first appearance of Bernard Shaw."¹ Indeed, the occasion was of real importance, for together with Sidney Webb, who was later persuaded by Shaw to join the Society, he not only turned this rather insignificant organization into a powerful and active political body, but also armed it with a practical and influential social philosophy.

Shaw's experience as a Fabian Socialist cannot be separated from his early years of nonentity in London when he fought with great mettle for self-improvement and also for literary recognition. In order to gain a proper evaluation of Shaw in this peculiar capacity, it is proposed to approach this problem through the background of Henry George's influence, the complementary relationship between Shaw and his Distributist friends, Chesterton and Belloc. Certain biographical details are therefore given for the sake of historical clarity on the one hand, and furthering our appreciation of Shaw's achievement in this field on the other.

1. See Frank H. Underhill, Canadian Forum, March, 1946, p. 278.

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Shaw was a poor aspiring young Irishman in London. Although he had expert knowledge in the fields of literature and music, Shaw had no formal university training. In order to make his way in literature and conquer his keen self-consciousness, he deliberately made himself an economic "parasite," to use his own term, of his mother, and spent most of his time on study in the British Museum. He frequented discussion groups, spoke in debates, and gave lectures. On one such occasion in 1879, he met Sidney Webb, (1859-1947) who was then a minor clerk in the Colonial Office.

One evening in 1882, Shaw attended a meeting in the Memorial Hall in Farrington Street, London, at which the speaker was Henry George, the author of the well-known Poverty and Progress, which aroused a fresh conscience in contemporary political and social thinking. Shaw was so very impressed by his speech that he was converted to socialism right on the spot by this "American apostle of Land Nationalization"¹ and "the importance of the economic basis dawned" on him.² Henceforth he declared himself a socialist. Henry George, who was aware of the consequences of poverty and misery which followed in the change of an agrarian society into an industrial one, advocated land reform. George, however, also realized the fact that under the existing institutions of the West, the electorate could always mould the political machine to their wishes by means of voting. From George, the Fabians received the inspiration of permeating their new social ideas into the old

1. Quoted from A.C. Ward, Bernard Shaw, 3rd ed. Published for the British Council and the National League by London, Longman, Green, 1957, p. 20.

2. Quoted from Frank H. Underhill, p. 279.

political system.

Soon afterwards, Shaw went to a meeting of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation. He stood up and made a remark by using what he had learned from George. The chairman scoffed at him and told him to read Karl Marx, who, said Shaw, "made a man of me." By reading Marx, he was further strengthened in "his lately acquired conversion to Henry-Georgian economics."¹ The two giant economists of the nineteenth century provided for him a crystalized system of political philosophy based on a revolt against middle class criteria, habits, and institutions, which was simultaneously essential to Shaw the dramatist.²

In January, 1885, Shaw was elected to the executive committee of the Fabian Society. He soon became the literary expert of the Society and edited its many important publications. But equally significant, perhaps, was the fact that Shaw shaped the temper and atmosphere of the Society. In The Early History of the Fabian Society, written by Shaw himself, we find the following episode:

...it was in this period [1885] that we contracted the invaluable habit of freely laughing at ourselves which has always distinguished, and which has saved us from becoming hampered by the gushing enthusiasts who mistake their own emotions for public movements. From the first, such people fled after one glance at us, declaring we were not serious. . . Our preference for practical suggestions and criticisms, and our impatience of all general expression of sympathy with working class aspirations, not to mention our way of chaffing our opponents in preference to denouncing them as enemies of the human race, repelled from us some warm-hearted and eloquent Socialists, to whom it seemed callous and cynical to be even commonly self-possessed in the presence of the sufferings upon which Socialists made war.³

1. A.C. Ward, p. 20.

2. See Frank H. Underhill, Canadian Forum, March, 1946, p. 279

3. Edward R. Pease, p. 50.

A vivid portrayal of the early Fabians and of their differences from the other socialists, Shaw's History gives, nonetheless, the impression that the Shavian spirit is predominant there. While emphasizing the practicality of suggestions and criticism, the early Fabians, Shaw in particular, despised the extravagance of emotional expression and empty sympathy. High seriousness and truth were paradoxically disguised in a humorous attitude.

On the other hand, there was Sidney Webb, who was the designer of practical economic and political programmes. Sidney Webb, who coined the famous Fabian catchword of "the inevitability of gradualness" was firmly convinced that the contemporary trend was moving steadily toward socialism. He saw in this development a task he could fulfil, not by resorting to revolutionary means, but by guiding it and speeding it up. Socialism, as Webb saw it, was the best management to avoid waste and disorder. A faithful utilitarian, he looked at human nature, as Mill had, as a blank page upon which circumstances wrote their stories. Hence he derived his theory of gradual inevitability and his belief in permeation in order to form a favourable public opinion. A deeper scrutiny shows that there exists an internal link between the two social thinkers in regard to the development of socialism in England. In the meeting of the British Association in Bath in 1888, Webb confounded the Millites by citing Mill against the theory of Free Trade. In Mill's Political Economy, we find a sincere questioning of, and dissatisfaction with the existing state of society, and the terms "Communism" and "Socialism" there were interchangeable around the 1840's:

If the choice were to be made between Communism with all its chances, and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices, if the institution of private property necessarily carried with it as a consequence that the produce of labour should be apportioned as we now see it almost in inverse proportion to labour, the largest portions to those whose work is almost nominal, and so in descending scale, the remuneration dwindling as the work grows harder and more disagreeable until the most fatiguing and exhausting bodily labour cannot count with certainty on being able to earn even the necessities of life, if this or Communism were the alternative, all the difficulties, great or small would be dust in the balance.

And further on in the next paragraph he wrote:

We are too ignorant, either of what individual agency in its best form or Socialism in its best form can accomplish, to be qualified to decide which of the two will be the ultimate form of human society.¹

While Mill attacked the capitalist system, and found it unable to provide a choice and a definite programme, Webb, after some fifty years, was enabled by accumulated experience and observation to offer a practical policy in promoting socialism.

In Facts for Socialists (1887), Webb set out to present the case for socialism with evidence and citations based on non-socialist authorities. In a convincing effort to permeate public opinion, he aimed at showing that socialism was a logical and necessary outcome of the tendencies operating in a capitalist state.

The collaboration of Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw may first be seen in their distinguished contribution to the well-known Fabian Essays in Socialism, which first appeared in 1889, with Shaw as the chief editor. It was a landmark in the history of British socialism for with its appearance, Fabian Socialism was enabled to claim a distinct

1. See Edward R. Pease, pp. 21-22

body of thought.

Originally, the Fabian Essays contained two contributions by Shaw, including his famous essay on rent. The remaining six articles were written by Sidney Webb, William Clarke, Sydney Olivier, Graham Wallas, Annie Besant and Herbert Bland. The tenet of these essays was state ownership of the majority of industries. Their writers saw in the growth of the great private trusts a stepping-stone to state-ownership. The kind of state-ownership that Fabian envisaged was operative through local and regional bodies, rather than through national and public organizations.

The County Council Acts of 1888, which effected a distinct advance in the concept of the democratic municipality, had a tremendous impact on the Fabian essayists, for in the Municipal Councils they saw the foundation for the operation of state-ownership. And this, to Shaw as well as to the other essayists, was the foundation of a truly social democratic state, for

A democratic State cannot become a Social-Democratic State unless it has in every centre of population a local governing body as thoroughly democratic in its constitution as the central Parliament.¹

The local government bodies, such as the Central Borough Councils and the New County Councils, were regarded as the proper organizations to administer tax on the surplus wealth of the local community, and make use of it to develop municipal industries and social welfare. And these government bodies should eventually come to own the land itself, both rural and urban.

1. Fabian Essays, p. 174.

The Fabian Essays do not, of course, cover the whole area of Fabian Socialism. Their purpose was, as Shaw says,

...to rescue Socialism and Communism from the barricades, from the pseudo-democracy of the Party System, from confusion with the traditional heterodoxies of anti-clericalism, individualist anti-State republicanism, ...: in short to make it a constitutional movement in which the most respectable citizens and families may enlist, without forfeiting the least scrap of their social or spiritual standing.²

By accepting the accredited economic theories of British economists, such as Mill, Ricardo and Jevon, and by laying the foundation of socialism on the basis of existing social institutions, the essayists tried, and succeeded in doing so, to prove that socialism was the inevitable outcome of the Industrial Revolution.

The high literary quality of the essays was achieved through the continuous labour and scrutiny of Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb. As an editor, Shaw took his duties most seriously. He weighed every word, and pondered every phrase before the book was printed.² He aimed at presenting the case for socialism in plain daily language. He set out, quite rightly, to communicate with the general readers, who were rather ill-instructed in their knowledge of socialism and economics.

Shaw's private life in this period claims our attention. He was an unknown journalist and art critic in his early twenties, struggling against poverty. His devotion to the duties of editorship, which was unpaid, meant financial sacrifice on his part. Yet he laboured on revision and amendments of the drafts that came into his hands at the cost of his time.

1. Ibid, p. 207

2. See Edward R. Pease, p. 87.

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Since 1905, Sidney and Beatrice Webb were working on the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, which contained a comprehensive plan for social security. While proposing the abolishment of the Poor Laws and the "pauper" status, the Webbs suggested at the same time that the Municipal and County Councils should play an active role in social services. They argued that they should take over the functions of the Board of Guardians, which was first set up in 1834. And these councils should further be merged with Public Health and other services. Urging the care of the aged, the sick, the disabled, and those unable to find work, the Webbs forewarned that no disqualification in respect of social and political rights should result from receiving the benefits of such services. For they should be regarded as that which the community owed to its members as of right. The functioning of the organization should be in the hands of elected local authorities and financed out of local funds and governmental grants. In order to reduce unemployment, planning of public works was suggested to expand or hold back as the circumstances might require.

The Report was a remarkable achievement in socialist writings, for it was the first detailed treatment of the policy of a welfare state. Later on the Webbs elaborated these ideas into essays on "permeation."

Deeply interested in education, Sidney Webb was the founder of the well-known London School of Economics. Apart from the London University Acts in 1897, he played a major role in education reforms with Lord Haldane, which gave rise to the Education Acts of 1912

and 1913. His efforts in his field further show the utilitarian belief in the effectiveness of education.

Mrs. Beatrice Webb had a philosophical bent of mind, which made her primarily a sociologist rather than a socialist. In her studies on socialism, Mrs. Webb's attitude was that of a critic on the limitations of prevailing economic theories and of Spencerian sociology. She was less concerned with the planning of a better society.

Very often, Shaw considered himself the exponent of the Webb ideas. He interpreted their studies and thereby made them accessible to the non-expert readers. He backed up their demand for a national minimum standard of civilized life as a phase in transition. In revolt against the conventional notion of the State, they looked at it as primarily an economic body, which, meanwhile, is a democratic institution, because its elected representatives with managerial responsibilities are at work in Parliament, in Municipal Councils and in the Consumers' Cooperative Movement. Like the Webbs, Shaw constantly urged a more important role for the Municipal Councils in the industrial enterprises, and advocated a multi-parliamentary system to replace the existing one.

On the whole, however, the early Fabians tended to respond to contemporary issues in a narrow and local manner, taking little account of such things as foreign policy, Trade Unionism, and the machinery of government. Bernard Shaw voiced some of the most far-reaching criticism in these respects. As a result, the Webbs made a thorough study of the history of British Trade Union movements based

on an empirical approach to sociology, and the A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain came into being as an attempt to sketch the institutions of socialist society.

The contribution the Webbs made to socialism was best summed up by Shaw himself, who said that

They gave historical consciousness to the proletarian movement by writing its history with the intimate knowledge and biographical vivacity need to give substance to the abstract proletariat described by Marx. The evolution of Trade Unionism, Co-operation and proletarian politics (Industrial Democracy) was reasoned out and documented by them. Their histories of English local government and of the Poor Law cover a huge part of the general field of British Constitutional and administrative activity, past and present. They cured Fabianism of the romantic amateurishness which had made other socialist agitations negligible and ridiculous, and contributed most of the Fabian Society's practical proposals for the solution of pressing problems. They shattered the old Capitalist theory of the impotence of the State for anything but mischief in industry, and demonstrated not only that communal and collective enterprise has already attained a development undreamt of by Ricardo and his contemporaries, but that Capitalism itself is dependent for its existence on State guidance, and has evolved collective forms of its own which have taken it far beyond the control of the individual private investor, and left it ripe for transfer to national or municipal ownership.¹

Those were also Shaw's aims and achievements. In their partnership, the Fabian Trio complemented one another perfectly: Shaw benefitted from the sociological statistics and data provided by the research carried out by the Webbs; on the other hand, the Webbs learned from Shaw a deeper understanding of human nature, which they had tended to oversimplify as economists and sociologists. What they also learned from Shaw was the necessity of leadership, and the difficulty of managing men within social institutions."

1. The Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 467.

2. See Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw, 1856-1950, Amended Edition, New York, New Direction, 1957, p. 16

The establishment of the Fabian Society, the contribution and the comradeship of Shaw and the Webbs have so far occupied our attention. There remains to be seen what exactly were the policy and tactics of the Fabian Society in the field of practical politics. The ideas of "gradualness" and "permeation" have been touched on in the foregoing discussion, and they sum up some of the basic concepts of Fabian tactics. First and foremost, the Fabians forsook the anarchic ideas of the radicalist which insisted that the socialist should always be against the government, the church and every existing institution, except that which was demanded by the Trade Unions and opposed by the Conservatives. Its policy, in Shaw's own words, was

...to support and take advantage of every legislative step towards Collectivism no matter what quarter it came from, nor how little its promoters dreamt that they were advocating an instalment of Socialism.¹

Thus by instalment, by evolution, the Fabian aimed at moving toward a welfare state, without violence, without bloodshed. Conservative though it appeared, and certainly prosaic and undramatic in practice, it was a policy of great sanity, and a method of utmost economy. It is in harmony with the Fabian hatred of waste. The procedure of this evolution was, as Shaw put it in 1908, in retrospect of the origin of the Fabian Society, that

We set ourselves two definite tasks; first, to provide a parliamentary programme for a Prime Minister converted to Socialism as Peel was converted to Free trade; and second, to make it as easy and matter-of-course for the ordinary respectable English to be a Socialist as to be a liberal or a Conservative.²

1. Fabian Essays, p. 211

2. Ibid., p. 211

In this light, the Fabian Society differed from ordinary political parties. Moreover, it did not seek direct political representation by putting forward Fabian candidates at elections, nor did it induce constituencies to choose socialists as their candidates.¹ Thus it did not have any party organization at all. A variety of opinions often existed between members, and nobody could gain the support or escape the opposition of the Society merely because he styled himself as a socialist. The Society maintained no party line. On the contrary, "it pressed its members to join every other association to which its members could gain admission and infect it with constitutional Socialism."²

That is the characteristic approach of permeation. The great opportunity for the Fabians came at the time when the British Trade Unionists formed the Independent Labour Party in 1893. A number of the Fabians were present at the Conference at Bradford which inaugurated the I.L.P. Its first programme was drafted by Bernard Shaw and Keir Hardie, a Scotch miner and the first elected I.L.P. leader. Though without claiming to be a socialist party in name, the I.L.P. accepted socialism as its aim and adopted the Fabian measure of socialization of national resources and the welfare state. Through the I.L.P. the Fabians established a direct contact with the masses and the labour movement.

When the Liberal Party fell in 1918, the Labour Party began to represent the people as the second major party in the country.

1. Preface to Fabian Essays, p. xxxiii.

2. See Edward R. Pease, pp. 126-127

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It is significant to notice that it was Sidney Webb who drew the first Labour Party declaration of faith - Labour and the New Social Order. And it was Webb again in 1923, when the Labour Party was about to take over the government, who became the chairman of its annual conference and spoke in this capacity on "the inevitability of gradualness." He cleverly avoid talking of class war, and socialism was shown in the light of social development, a stage which was the outcome of existing situations. When the Labour Party was finally elected, it had among its cabinet minister two Fabians, Webb and Olivier.¹

By this time, having helped mold a political party after its own image and having penetrated into Parliament through Labour, Fabianism began to show signs of decline following the resignation of the Old Guard in 1911. But under the leadership of G.D.H. Cole, the Society became an intellectual centre for research and publication of tracts in social and economic problems, a function which Shaw pointed out as the only means for the Society's survival after the completion of permeation and socialization.

So much for the historical background of Fabian Socialism. Like every other organization composed of intelligent individuals, the Fabian Society was not exempt from rifts and clashes of opinions and personalities.

The first rupture took place in 1899 on the occasion of the Boer War. Shaw produced his most important political pamphlet, Fabianism and the Empire, in support of the British position in South

1. See Frank H. Underhill, Canadian Forum, April, 1946, pp. 8-9

Africa. He, together with other members like H.G. Wells and the Webbs, in the executive committee, felt that President Kruger represented a retrogressive type of culture, because of a serious lack of administrative and governmental efficiency. The logical sequence to the Fabian hatred of inefficiency and waste was a replacement of government by a more progressive, more advanced nation in those underdeveloped countries, which included many Asian countries at the time. The Fabians strongly believed that since international tariffs and trade would lead to international prosperity and well-being, those backward countries had no right to hold on to their traditional notion of geographical boundaries, and thus refuse an international participation of their natural resources. Here we get a foretaste of Shaw's later advocacy of world government. Yet on the whole, the Fabian foreign policy in this period appeared highly nationalistic, an attitude similar to that which was expressed by Lord Alfred Tennyson in Locksley Hall in 1842, in which the speaker looked forward to the "wondrous Mother Age" and felt a certain sense of superiority over the rest of the underdeveloped countries.¹ This attitude caused a terrible rift between the Old Guard and the Anti-Imperialists, with the withdrawal of Ramsay MacDonald and many others from the Society. The criticism of Frank H. Underhill appears to be a fair one that "The original Fabians were a little too apt to react to international crises as simple-minded loyal nationalists."² This limitation was fairly well amended; since 1914 there have come some of the best publications on

1. Ibid., 11. 108, 174, 184.

2. Frank H. Underhill, Canadian Forum, April, 1946, p. 9

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the subject of international government, of war, of pacificism and of the empire. Fabianism and the Empire, important as it was, was neither included in the later editions of the Fabian Essays nor in Shaw's collected work.

The second explosion of internal dispute was brought about by H.G. Wells. As an early Fabian, he was motivated by a love of order and a hatred of waste and frustration in his approach to socialism. He had profound understanding of the lower middle class people, who were limited by the necessities of life, and were unable to rise above the situation owing to their education background. The "little man" was the embodiment of Wells's sympathy for the lower middle class people presented in concrete personification in The Wheel of Chance.

Prompted by this sympathy, he wrote the famous Outline of History and The Science of Life in order to promote popular education among those people who made their way to higher education through the Polytechnics, The Technical College and so on, a stage Wells himself had gone through.

As a novelist, Wells succeeded at the same time in popularizing socialism and remonstrating on the waste and deprivation in a competitive system of capitalist society, and this found expression in This Misery of Boots. His best writings came at a time when the younger generation of the middle class was subject to the conversion of socialism as a result of the promotion of higher education, particularly through the evening classes.¹ Wells was doubtless a great

1. See G.D.H. Cole, History of Socialist Thought, Vol. III, part 1: "The Second International." London, Macmillan, 1956, p. 203.

popularizer of socialist ideas as well as an influential writer.

Paradoxically enough, in contrast to his love of order, Wells often showed disorderliness in his behaviour, especially in co-operation with a group. He often fell into dispute with his colleagues became exasperated and went off on a new track with new hopes. Perhaps too much of an individualist and liberal himself, Wells was a failure in his cooperation with the Fabians.

His clash with the Webbs was one of difference in temperament rather than of ideas. Shaw sided with the Webbs. In the course of his attacks, H.G. Wells, however, made a number of valuable criticisms on the Fabian situation. He was dissatisfied with the small ways of the Society and its failure to create a larger membership. "Make Socialists," said Wells, "and you will achieve Socialism: there is no other plan."¹ The Old Gang far from refusing his criticism, followed his advice by enlarging memberships and increasing local Fabian Societies. The New Statesman also came into being through Wells' attack.

As an individualist² and artist, Wells was suspicious of the Webbs' interpretation of socialism. He saw in it a tendency toward regimentation, an annihilation of individuality in favour of a mechanic uniformity. This, together with their basic difference in

1. Ibid., p. 206

2. There are many interpretations to the term. By individualist, here, I mean one who is against the regimentation of government, one who values liberty and the peculiar individuality of a person and refuses to look at human beings as cogs in the mechanic bureaucracy of a government.

temperament, gave birth to Wells' unkind satire on the Webbs in his novel, The New Machiavelli. With the whole executive committee against him, the episode ended with Wells' withdrawal from the Society in 1909.

Shaw's Anti-Boer position, meanwhile, provoked further dispute outside the Society. G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc were staunch opponents of the Boer War. While they both respected and befriended Shaw, they were, nevertheless, poles apart in matters of economics and politics. The result was a series of interesting debates. The Chesterbelloc, as Shaw called the two intellectual twins most sonorously, was against the oppression of smaller nations and the robbery of their natural resources. Their sympathy for the Boers was quickened by the very fact that the British forces were helping to demolish the system of small land ownership, a point dear to the Distributists. The Chesterbelloc opposed Shaw's advocacy of Pax Britannica, to use Chesterton's very words. Yet, to look at the case from an immigration point of view, since the Boers were also an immigrant force at work in an alien piece of land, perhaps the British action might be justified in offering a better government. But, all in all, one is impressed by the sanity and generosity in the Chesterbelloc's approach to the sovereignty of smaller nations and they showed more proper respect for international justice in spite of wealth and world trade; the Boer dispute, therefore, went deeper than a difference in approaching an international problem, for as Chesterton says:

It was a part of the Fabian cult of common sense to regard Irish nationalism as a narrow sentimentalism, distracting

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men from the main business of socializing the resources of the whole world. But I only note that my controversy with G.B.S., both logically and chronologically, is from the beginning. Since I have argued with him on almost every subject in the world, and we have always been on opposite sides, without affection or animosity.¹

Chesterton's position was, as he himself puts it most interestingly and pithily, to defend the institution of the family, the institution of Beef and Beer, the old liberal notion of nationalism. He therefore repudiated Shaw's 'fantasy' of a Platonic state, and his "new Socialist notion of internationalism." Chesterton disagreed with Shaw's "hygienic severity of Vegetarianism" and certainly opposed "what he [Shaw] regards as the searing illuminosity of superman,"² which he found undemocratic.

Though Shaw, and H.G. Wells too, fought against Chesterton and Belloc on almost every subject, they did hold a common ground based on their profound respect for human justice and the British tradition of fair play. The existing phenomenon with the upper and middle classes above the working people, enjoying the fruit of their labour, was not only held to be unhealthy but also **inhuman** and unreal. They needed reform because the upper and middle classes had forgotten the standard of common fairness and ignored human rights. But other than this similarity, socialist Shaw and Distributists Chesterton and Belloc resorted to different measures to bring about a fairer distribution of wealth. Quite rightly, in his definition of socialism,

1. C.K. Chesterton, *Autobiography*, London, Burns, Oates and Warebourne, 1936, p. 226.

2. *Ibid*, p. 226

G.K. Chesterton pointed out a very important characteristic of a socialist state, that in the course of its attempts to avoid the calamities of unfair distribution, state ownership becomes a collectively organized action.¹ In other words, individuality is apt to be destroyed under such conditions.

Beginning with an acceptance of socialism, "simply because it seemed at the time the only alternative to the dismal acceptance of Capitalism,"² Chesterton ended up in a series of efforts to promote Distributism in the hope of avoiding the destruction of individuality. Together with Belloc, he held that it was much more natural for man to own a small but fair amount of property. It was a proposal which attempted to avoid the unnatural lack of social and economic equilibrium of capitalism, and, at the same time, to broaden the basis of ownership. A Distributist society would be composed of independent small owners of land and shop keepers. It is held that in a Distributist state man has the right either to accept or refuse contracts without the threat of punishment, whereas in a socialist state, where man himself tends to become part of the possession of the state, he will lose such rights. Distributism was thus a revolt against capitalism, with national resources grabbed by a few people. At the same time it was a refusal of socialism, where property is demolished and human independence and liberty intervened by the state. The ideas of Distributism

1. See G.K. Chesterton, George Bernard Shaw. New York, Hill and Lang, 1958, p. 58.

2. Autobiography, p. 244

were propagated in the following periodicals: The Eye Witness, The New Witness, G.K.'s Weekly and The Weekly Reviews, which followed one after another from 1912. The common aims were to "fight for the liberty of Englishmen against increasing enslavement to a Plutocracy" on the one hand, and "to expose and combat corruption in public life" on the other.¹

It was with these considerations in mind that Bellow preached against the advent of a Servile State in The Eye Witness. According to Belloc, it was the kind of state, an arrangement of society,

...in which so considerable a number of the families and individuals are constrained by positive law to labour for the advantage of other families and individuals as to stamp the whole community with the mask of such labour.²

It was in reality a return to slavery. And the idea was later on developed into The Servile State (1912) which was a major assault on Capitalistic industrialism. Except in theory, such a system was actually undemocratic in practice. The few capitalists who controlled the means of production were the equals of those who were in majority and had nothing to sell except their labour. From there Belloc set out to prove his thesis with almost mathematical evidence that capitalism must develop into a state in which the proletariat majority were compelled to work for the rich ruling minority. Being economically unfree, the working people were actually politically unfree, for they lacked a free status, which financial means alone could enable them to obtain.

1. Masie Ward, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1943, pp. 321-322.

21. Quoted from Masie Ward, p. 323.

All that the proletariat could choose was to starve or work.

Holding a dark view of capitalistic industrialism, Belloc saw no cheerful hope for the socialistic Utopia either. For in the course of collectivizing the means of production, the worker would become the slave of the state, gaining his food and shelter at the sacrifice of his liberty. Capitalism was on the verge of collapsing, and socialism was equally unstable unless it was maintained by totalitarian means.¹ And the Chesterbelloc "did not think, then or ever, that any increase of comfort or security was a sufficiently good reason to be bought at the price of liberty."²

As champion of individual political freedom, Belloc took pains to outline this idea in a number of pamphlets and articles. The most significant of them were Economics for Helen (1924) and An Essay on the Restoration of Property (1936), where he expounded the various means of ownership, distribution of land, shop and collective enterprises, which, by the by, would become the only alternative to industrial slavery.

This proposal seems very attractive indeed. But the issue is how best to bring about a fair and sufficient share of possession in the present community, both qualitatively and quantitatively. In a debate with Belloc in 1913, Shaw attacked the whole idea of Distributism by saying that:

Mr. Belloc's scheme is to take real property, the land of the country, for instance, ..., and parcel it out among

1. Eleanor and Reginald Jebb, Belloc the Man, Westminster, Md., The Newman Press, 1957, p. 46.

2. Masie Ward, p. 323.

the inhabitants under the impression that they will live happily ever afterwards. This has already been tried and has broken down. It has produced all the evils of our existing industrial organization... The result of the inequalities in the productiveness of the earth is that if you give every man three acres the man who owns the productiveness, soil will speedily become the slave of the man who owns the soil that is more productive.¹

Here Shaw looked at the problem of distribution from a more practical and scientific angle.

Distributionism meant a complete economic rearrangement of the existing community, and it was supposed to be an alternative to socialism. If socialism means state intervention, in the words of Masie Ward, the author of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, one wonders whether a Distributist society could ever be achieved without some sort of effort from the state, and therefore one may question whether it could ever succeed without some sort of socialism, according to Ward's interpretation of the term.

The Chesterbelloc maintained that it is in man's very nature to possess something of his own. Many people, no doubt, will find a fair and sufficient share of private property a more satisfactory way out than socialism, meaning state ownership. However, so far as this bit of human nature is concerned, one may very well ask whether this has been a habit and desire formed in the course of man's continuous efforts to combat the evil threats of nature, such as famine, flood and drought.

Differing interests in the solution of economic and social problems caused a life-long tournament of wit between Shaw and the

1. Platform and Pulpit, pp. 97-98.

Chesterbelloc. In 1911, there occurred in Memorial Hall, London, a debate between Shaw and G. K. Chesterton with Hilaire Belloc in the chair. An exactly similar version of this debate was later published in a slim volume under the title of Do We Agree. In rejecting Shaw's definition of socialism as equal income, an exact division of the income of the whole country among its citizens, G. K. Chesterton retorted that

A Socialist believes that monstrous division of modern property can only be cured by the Government, the state, coming in and coercively claiming all the property and paying it back in wages to the citizens.¹

Further on he added:

The existing system is proletarian. Large masses of men depend upon wages doled out to them by someone else. The whole Socialist theory is proletarian. I do not care whether the man who deals out the money is called Lord so-and-so, and is the employer and head of the great soap works, or whether he is still called Lord so-and-so (as he probably will be) and called the Social Administrator in the name of the State of the same soap works.²

He saw no difference between socialism and capitalism, which are founded on proletarian bases. The alternative to collectivism and centralization was, as Chesterton suggested, decentralization, which was the only cure for the "monstrous division of modern property" and coercive state ownership.

But perhaps more important in this debate was that it typified the swift exchange of mental and verbal rapiers, sharp repartees and matches of wits between Shaw and Chesterton, who always excelled in a hall of moderate size, where they could best be followed by the whole audience. For example, we have in the following an onslaught

1. Platform and Pulpit, p. 89.

2. Ibid., p. 92.

by Chesterton on Shaw:

Mr. Shaw said Socialism means the absolutely equal payment of all human beings without respect to class, sex or age. Does he mean that a new-born babe shall be at once in receipt, I cannot say enjoyment, of the income which would be right and proper to a grown, working human being? (Mr. Shaw: "Yes.")¹

This mental tournament reached its wittiest height when Shaw remarked,

I proposed a certain distribution of property so that everybody shall have some. For practical purposes it must be measured by income. (Chesterton: "No.") I say the State should distribute money, which gives a man command of the things he likes, in equal proportions - What do you say? (Mr. Chesterton: "I don't mind.") That is trifling with the question; you must mind. I wish I could persuade Mr. Chesterton that I really am a serious man dealing with a serious question. Since Mr. Chesterton does mean apparently that everybody is to have their share, what is the share to be. Are you to have more or less than I? Is any man to have more or less than another? If so, why?...I say everyone should have enough so far as the resources go.²

One may agree with the half truth that the debates between Shaw and Chesterton were "a sham fight or a display of fireworks,"³ but actually, real mental challenges were thrown at the audience, and there was real display of the operation of the mind. In distinguishing socialism from collectivism, Shaw said that the latter "without Socialism might be a system of tyranny, of slavery so infernal that I can conceive only one thing worse - the existing state of things." Shaw deftly provoked the audience to think and compare. Discussing Shaw's definition of a gentlemen and whether or not Shaw was a Democrat, Chesterton said:

I am sure I am a Democrat and Mr. Shaw is not a Democrat. I cannot remember a single word he has ever written or spoken shewing belief in Democracy; certainly he has uttered none

1. Platform and Pulpit, p. 89.

2. Ibid., p. 91

3. Masie Ward, p. 220

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such this evening. I don't know what is the social rank of a person who presumes to be a gentleman, and not a Socialist, compared with the social rank of the gentleman who is a Socialist, and not a Democrat, like Mr. Shaw. The opposite of a gentleman is not a cad, anymore than the opposite of a sailor is a pirate.¹

In a witty, amiable and persuasive manner, Chesterton leads us to question, seriously, the whole attitude of Shaw toward democracy. Surely, this was something more than a display of mental fireworks.

The debates between Shaw and the Chesterbelloc were clean and generous in spirit. They were rather chivalrous contests and a friendly feud, for each opponent had good faith in the other and recognized as well as respected their shared belief in social justice. Chesterton's method in debate, like that of Shaw, was to attack by first setting out questions, and through this means, both of them were able to buttonhole the audience's interest. In his criticism of Shaw's approach to poverty, Chesterton appeared to resort to paradox, which brings about compliment and understanding in a contradictorily forceful and epigrammatic manner:

When taxed in a Daily News discussion with being a Socialist for the obvious reason that poverty was cruel, he said this was quite wrong; it was because poverty was wasteful. He practically professed that modern society annoyed him, not so much like an unrighteous kingdom but rather like an untidy room. Everyone who knew him knew...that he was full of a proper brotherly bitterness about the oppression of the poor. But again, he would not admit that he was anything but an economist.²

In fact the whole Shaw-Chesterton relationship seems a little paradoxical against this background of friendly feud. Some

1. Platform and Pulpit, p. 88.

2. George Bernard Shaw, p. 59

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of the best tributes to Shaw came from G.K. Chesterton. There was growing understanding and appreciation of one great man of letters for another:

Here was a man who could have enjoyed art among the artists, who could have been the wittiest of all the flan-neurs: who could have made epigrams like diamonds and drunk music like wine. He has instead laboured in a mill of statistics and crammed his mind with all the most dreary and the most filthy details so that he can argue on the spur of the moment about sewing machines or sewage, about typhus fever or two penny tubes. The usual mean theory of motives will not cover the case; it is not ambition, for he could have been twenty times more prominent as a plausible and popular humorist. It is the real and ancient emotion of salus populi, almost extinct in our oligarchail chaos; nor will I for one, as I pass on to many matters of argument or quarrel, neglect to salute a passion so implacable and so pure.¹

Here is the salute from Shaw's opponent, who calls our attention to the purity and implacability of Shaw's passion for public well-being. With Chesterton's tribute in mind, we now turn to examine Shaw's political and economic ideals, which, together with this chapter on the Fabian Society and the quarrels between Shaw and the Chesterbelloc, it is hoped, will illuminate this study of Shaw's technique in teaching.

1. George Bernard Shaw, pp. 63-64

CHAPTER III

SHAW'S TEACHING

It is often contended that Shaw was never a democrat;¹ and that as a Fabian Socialist, he had diverted from his original course, assumed a general totalitarian outlook and advocated revolutionary means; some even proposed that Shaw had never been a real Fabian at all. These charges immediately contradicted his advocacy of a social democracy and annulled his claim and activities as a Fabian Socialist. In dealing with the social, economic and political ideals and principles of Shaw in this chapter, we hope to find out whether or not Shaw was a heretic of Fabianism, or more truly perhaps, whether Shaw had advanced from his original position and belief as a Fabian through the years and was thus enabled to command a wider and more profound view of society and politics.

The word "economics" derives from Greek and meant originally "steward" and "to manage".² As a science, it "treats of the development of material resources, or of the production, preservation and distribution of wealth and of the means and methods of living well, for the state, the family and the individual."³ Now, this introduction and explanation of the word 'economics' may seem to be off on a tangent from the present topic. However, it is justifiable to the extent

1. See the foregoing discussion on Chesterton and Shaw relationship.

2. See H.W. Fowler, Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 1926.

3. For this and the following quotations please see Funk and Wagnalls, New Standard Dictionary of the English Language, New York Funk & Wagnall, 1960.

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that economics is a "science of man's temporal well-being in the widest sense," and Shaw claimed to be an economist himself and devoted his life to the betterment of living conditions. Thus it is proposed to look at Shaw's social and political philosophy from the standpoint of life. It was through a zeal for improving contemporary living conditions, perhaps first prompted by the ugly sight of poverty in the streets of Dublin,¹ that Shaw was led to being a Fabian Socialist. It was through love of life that Shaw wanted to have a better social order, better culture and better civilization for mankind. The whole intention of Shaw in his effort to effect socialism and abolish poverty was penetratingly presented by Sean O'Casey in his appreciation of the achievement of this great Irish dramatist:

Shaw saw that there was desperate disorder in poverty, and he loved order; he saw that there was disease in poverty, and he loved health; he saw that there was death in poverty, and he loved life. So possibly, in these Dublin streets, the resolve first set itself into the young mind to circumvent this satanic trinity of death, disease and disorder by a fight to abolish poverty forever and a day; and not by being meek about it.²

This love of life, a sound and healthy life, led Shaw further to combat class distinctions which obstruct better breeding of mankind.

This love culminated in his philosophy of the Life Force, a world view that human activities are permeated by an evolutionary force of vitality which aims ultimately at the superman, and it found personal expression in his practice of vegetarianism.

1. Platform and Pulpit, p. 94

2. Sean O'Casey, "Bernard Shaw: An Appreciation of a Fighting Idealist," Book Review, The New York Times, Nov. 12, 1950. p. 41

Poverty was the target of Shaw's life-long battle. It is a degradation, both morally and physically; the consumption of life and time of the poor in their struggle for livelihood makes them selfish, petty, animal and vulgar. Life ceases to mean anything to them except a matter of filling up the stomach. As Shaw pointed out in Mrs. Warren's Profession, buying food and sustenance by selling dignity and good faith was a fact of prostitution; and our society is in this sense practising prostitution. Poverty, therefore, is demoralizing. The only remedy of this social ill is wealth, as Shaw put it in the Preface to Major Barbara:

Now to deplore this preference as sordid, and teach children that it is sinful to desire money, is to strain towards the extreme limit of impudence in lying and corruption in hypocrisy. The universal regard for money is the one hopeful fact in our civilization, the one sound spot in our social conscience. Money is the most important thing in the world. It represents health, strength, honour, generosity and beauty as conspicuously and undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness and ugliness. Not the least of its virtues is that it destroys base people as certainly as it fortifies and dignifies noble people.¹

To Shaw socialism never means a respectful state of poverty where every-boyd lives like St. Francis of Assisi. Socialism therefore means "equality of income and nothing more." The Fabian hatred of disorder and waste bears the imprint of Shaw's effort against the corruption and degradation of society by poverty. It is, to a large extent, because of the importance of better livelihood that "one man, one room" plays a far more important role than "one man, one vote" in Shaw's political convictions, for, after all, an active and intelligent parti-

1. Bernard Shaw, Major Barbara. London, Penguin Books, 1957. p. xi.

cipation of the people in politics demands an upbringing in a proper environment, and it is here that hygiene merges with politics.

In the face of the colossal demands for social reforms in the nineteenth century, the Fabian Society, as has been shown in the preceding chapter, did not stand out as a political party. Always with a divergence of opinions among its members, the Society trusted its existence to the efforts of finding out a better means of distributing wealth. Rationalism is the keynote of Fabianism and it finds expression in constitutionalism and permeation, which are its methods and tactics. Bloodshed, destruction and waste were denounced and had no place in the course of rearranging the whole economic system for, to the Fabians, efforts were made to ameliorate the conditions of life and not aggravate them. The emphasis of sanity and reason led Shaw to condemn "the young Socialist [who] is apt to be catastrophic in his views."¹ He reacted against the rashness of revolutionary socialists and advocated "gradual" and "cautious" change. Shaw was pretty consistent on this point, in spite of the fact that he wavered in his approach to tactics and revolution in the late 1920's and 30's. We shall discuss this later on. In his eighties he still clung to the fact that

Sabotage and murder as a cure for political abuses have never proved permanent and have often aggravated the disease...

Heroic aspiration, devoted services, dauntless bravery, unsparing bloodshed are worse than useless when the combatants understand neither what is wrong or how to set it right.²

1. Fabian Essays, p. 170

2. Everybody's Political What's What, pp. 259, 260.

The theme here is still a practical programme of socialism, and the denunciation of romantic emotionalism in reformatory affairs is characteristically Shawian.

Shaw scoffed at capitalism and condemned exploitation. Shaw's two original contributions to the Fabian Essays, one on rent and the other on transition to socialism are in many ways the basis of his social, economic and political thinking. Both essays contain most of Shaw's major interest-patterns in socialism, apart from rent, such as the denunciation of capitalists, fairer distribution of wealth, the tactics of permeation, the ideal of a welfare state, the equality of income and state ownership by instalments, all structured on the belief in the abolishment of poverty and the construction of a better society.

The essay on rent was a product of the influence of Ricardo, Jevons and Henry George. He accepted the orthodox British economists' definition of the term. The fact that Shaw places his economic theory in the setting of these economists, instead of Marx's, causes perpetual conjectures.¹ It is likely, however, that Shaw was trying to attract the radicals of the eighteen eighties, to whom those economists had a more ready appeal. This very adoption, therefore, may well be looked upon as a matter of permeation.

To Shaw, rent was the "excess due to... fertility [of land]." It is different from "interest" in the sense that the latter designates the excess arising from capital, or industry:

1. Maurice Dobb, "Bernard Shaw and Economics," G.B.S. 90, ed. by S. Winsten, New York, Dodd, Mead, 1946; p. 171.

Colloquially, one property with a farm on it is said to be land yielding rent; whilst another, with a railway on it, is called capital yielding interest. But economically there is no distinction between them when they became the source of revenue.¹

While this theory was patterned on Henry George, it actually corresponds to Karl Marx's surplus value, for further on in the same essay Shaw said: "Shareholder and landlords live alike, on the produce extracted from their property by the labour of the proletariat."² The central idea here is very much in harmony with Marx's analysis of the capitalist society in which he held that the fruit of social labour is grabbed by a few people, not because they contribute anything to economic production but because they have in their hands the means of production. Those people form a class of their own and thus stratify the whole society into a class of property and a class without. Shaw later admitted in The Intelligent Woman's Guide³ that class distinction rose from the appropriation of rent by one class and denounced those people as parasites in Everybody's Political What's What. Meanwhile the dictum of Proudhon on "Property is theft" was hailed in the "Revolutionist's Handbook" in Man and Superman as the only perfect truism on the subject.⁴ As to the income of the middle-class which comes from the so-called "reward of ability", it is part and parcel of the same unearned surplus or rent, because it often owes its existence to the demand and need of the pro-

1. Fabian Essays, p. 19

2. Ibid., p. 19

3. Op. Cit., pp. 340-1

4. Bernard Shaw, Man and Superman; A Comedy and a Philosophy, London, Penguin Books, 1957

pertied class.

We find that Karl Marx's inspiration is at work here. In spite of the fact that Shaw accepted Ricardo's generalization on rent and Jevon's notion of "final utility,"¹ he rejected their method of distribution. Owing to the existence of rent, no matter in what form it is, labour is cheapened in order to reap the highest surplus, and means are directed towards the control and restriction of supply in order to gain more and thus it leads to monopoly, despite the general need of the community. Rent in this light is the cause of the notorious injustice of the present society, an exploitation of the means of livelihood, smiting the conscience of mankind, as is amply shown in Mrs. Warren's Profession and the Preface to Major Barbara. "By giving all the work to one class" Shaw pointed out, "and all the leisure to another the Capitalist system disables the rich as completely as the poor."² Why is that so? With all the rent being appropriated by one class the propertyless class is left to deterioration through malnutrition and corruption through escape into artificial jobs by means of liquor. By amassing more riches than they can use, the rich people vegetate in luxuries and regurgitate in waste, and thus expose themselves to both moral and physical degradation. Strikes have been introduced to level the division of riches, but they, alas, bring about gross waste and inefficiency at the same time.

The remedy Shaw proposed was to enforce an income derived from labour. Rent as a whole should belong to society, as do all social

1. See Fabian Essays, pp. 6, 14.

2. The Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 165.

products. The logical solution to this was the socialization of land and capital. In The Intelligent Woman's Guide, Shaw examined the ways of distribution and he listed seven methods, each of which is eliminated as unworkable. If distribution is to be carried out according to what one produces, we would soon find it quite impossible, since there is hardly any way to find out how much each person has produced, and a great deal of work produced is of a non-material and unsubstantial nature. Again there are all sorts of interpretations from different people as to the meaning of "to each what one deserves." The scale of merit is difficult to set, if not impossible. Shaw interprets laissez-faire in terms of "to each what he can grab." The telling existing situation with all the chaotic and cruel consequences of hectic competition proves it to be abominable. Like oligarchy and class distribution are unworkable, because the welfare and means of sustenance of the majority of people are sacrificed to one person or to very few. In eliminating each of those seven alternatives, Shaw clearly pointed to the fact that equality of income, namely socialism, is the only way out. But how best can socialism be carried out? These are the two controversial points in Shaw's social theory, which are at the same time crucial to Shaw as a Fabian socialist.

To appeal to reason and avoid bloodshed in the course of economic rearrangement which produces a fairer distribution of wealth was the essence of Fabian tactics. In his essay on transition, as has been pointed out, revolutionary socialists were stultified. The gradual extinction of private property rests on the belief that resistance to this practice could be handled within democratic institutions. Income tax

can peacefully confiscate all private property. "Resolute constitutionalism"¹ had been the hall-mark of the Fabian Essays. But 39 years after its appearance, Shaw denied that "inevitability of gradualness" means the "inevitability of peacefulness" in The Intelligent Woman's Guide.² The recent events in Spain and Ireland taught Shaw the efficacy of revolutionary methods. In the preface to the 1931 reprint of the Fabian Essays, he remarked:

A European convulsion,..., has changed the world more in four years than Fabian constitutional action seems likely to do in four hundred. A staggering shock to constitutionalism has come from the settlement of the Irish question by crude force...³

He was impatient with the scanty achievement of socialism in England through a slow and gradual transition. While this 'sensational' incident of Irish independence was stimulated by the German with "a bayonet" at the throat of the British Government, Shaw added that "English steel is equally effective."

Had Bernard Shaw deserted the cause of Fabian permeation? Does that mean that Shaw was advocating a method of "crude force" and revolution in the communist vein? It would be proper, perhaps, to draw in once again the Fabian motto which teaches "to strike hard" when the right moment comes, or else, all the waiting would be meaningless. Shaw, here, was reviewing a possibility towards a more effective realization of socialism, a method in no way contradictory to the original intention

1. Fabian Essays, p. viii.

2. Op. Cit., p. 377

3. Op. Cit., p. ix.

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of the Fabian Society. But perhaps the most important argument against the 'betrayal' of Shaw rests on the fact that Shaw kept hammering at the need for a constructive government. Here is an extract from his essay on "Sixty Years of Fabianism" written in 1947:

But though Socialist may be substituted for Capitalist Governments in twenty-four hours it by no means follows that industry and agriculture, religion and art and their professions, and capital, can be transferred from private to public ownership and management in twenty-four hours or complete even within twenty-four years.¹

Here is contained a firm Fabian belief that construction, in spite of an entire and successful change of political power overnight, must take time to complete.

It was significant, again, to notice that in The Intelligent Woman's Guide, he rejected the idea of class war, and called it a civil war instead. He further labelled those people "extremist"² who urged violence in political and economic transition. Equally significant was the fact that while reviewing the sensational events in Russia, Italy and Spain since 1917, and weighing their achievements in the 1931 preface to the Fabian Essays, class war had never been mentioned. He struck here the fundamental difference between Marxism and Fabianism in their approach to history. The latter refused to look at it as a series of class wars, and to believe that the transition of the control of productive means from one class to another must be achieved by revolution. In his political swan song, Everybody's Political What's What, Shaw once again denounced the revolutionary socialists for blood-

1. Fabian Essays, p. 215.

2. The Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 384.

shed and sabotage.

While communism is essentially the case for nationalization of production by the proletariat, in which distribution is carried out in terms of the needs of the people, Fabianism, on the other hand, according to Shaw, is fundamentally a fairer way of distribution. Social legislation, to quote Shaw,

...means an active interference in the production and distribution of the nation's income; and every step it will require a new department or extension of the civil service or the municipal service to execute or manage it.¹

The Fabian way of distribution was, therefore, to be conducted in a small municipal manner, and it was supposed to be carried out in terms of money. In a communist state, where distribution is manipulated according to individual needs, money will eventually lose its function.

Again contrary to communism which aims at an international exercise and control of political and economic powers on the part of the proletarian labourers, Shaw in "Sixty Years of Fabianism" maintained that the equalization of income, which is the "final" aim of socialism, was a domestic affair.² Home interests always dominate the Fabian approach to economic and political issues.

What does equality of income mean exactly? Would this be an arithmetical division? If so, how could that be achieved? And where does Shaw's love of life come in to bear on his economics? The urgency to level the differences in income lies in the fact that while "one baby," to quote Shaw, "has a hundred thousand a year, [yet] a hundred

3. The Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 384.

2. Fabian Essays, p. 217.

other babies are dying of insufficient nourishment..."¹ The sense of social justice is most obvious here. Since the unfair distribution of the present economic system deteriorates the growth of human lives, equality of income thus comes in as a crucial economic solution to abolish poverty which causes undernourishment, breeds disease and death. But in what manner is this scheme to be effected? In The Intelligent Woman's Guide, where Shaw treated rather lengthily the problems of distribution, we find to our disappointment that there was no satisfactory answer to this question. In later years, however, Shaw came to amend this deficiency by pointing out that exact mathematic division of national income among the number of people in the country and an allotment to everybody an equal quota was a simple but inapplicable process, because,

...as the Russians have found out, this quota falls far short of the cost of production of the culture and education needed for the production and support of the thinkers and managers without whom modern civilization cannot exist.²

A sufficient total production thus becomes the foremost requisite for equality of income. The training of an engineer, physicist, philosopher or poet always thrusts itself to the foreground of a socialist distribution programme, because of the necessity of their existence and of their special need. So Shaw punctured the illusion that "mathematical equality should be an end in itself."³

1. The Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 384

2. Fabian Essays, p. 217.

3. Everybody's Political What's What? p. 56.

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What then is equality of income? Is what Shaw proposed a contradiction or a paradox? In trying to answer these questions, it is advisable, perhaps, to return to our original standpoint of economics as a vital science of life. For again and again Shaw urged equality of income because it is "the determination of the basic income needed to abolish poverty and ignorance and make every family a potential place for an Aristocracy of talents."¹ And in Everybody's Political What's What Shaw held that

The statesman aiming at equal distribution of income will find that he must fix a wage figure at which no talent or genius can be wasted through lack of the means for its fullest cultivation.²

Equality of income, in this light, is a goal to work toward rather than an actual state of things. It is a goal, again organic to Shaw's philosophy of the superman. The existing situation being what it is, the inferior stocks are outbreeding the superior ones. The economic bar is so very strong that it makes intermarriages between people of different economic backgrounds impossible. Insofar as mathematical variation in the amount of individual income was accepted by Shaw in order to preserve and further cultivate civilization through those already cultured and educated people, a fixed basic wage figure was urged because this would enable everybody to enjoy the same education and break down the bar of difference in manner and taste, and thus enlarge the basis for better breeds. Through intermarriage, the number of better and more useful citizens would be increased.

1. Fabian Essays, p. 218.

2. Op. cit., p. 56

The very idea of superman and "Aristocracy of talents" does not sound very ~~democratic~~. As a matter of fact, Shaw was contemptuous of the kind of system which most of us take to be democracy. He sneered at the ignorance of the crowd and their lack of sense of aim, easily falling victim of their own ignorance and panic. Here is a quotation from Max Beer's criticism of Shaw:

Having no objective guide, no leading principle to go by, Shaw necessarily arrives at hero-worship - at the hankering on after a Superman to guide mankind. I have noticed the same mental development in several continental critics like Harden, Bahr, Ernest, etc. They began with Social Democracy, passed through the Ibsen period, worshipped An Enemy of the People, finally become adherents of Nietzsche in theory and of Bismark of some other social imperialists in practice. Marxism is the antithesis of all that... The Revisionists, or Fabians, say: "Socialism is, before all, an administrative problem; it is not a class struggle, but a clever management of public affairs! It is the superman in local government."

Behind Shaw's belief in the "Aristocracy of talents," however, was Ruskin, who believed in an aristocracy of brains, in which the working men should strive to rise above their intellectual level; and behind Ruskin was Carlyle, a staunch worshipper of true heroes.

Shaw questioned the so-called system of democracy, which seemingly laid the responsibility of choice of government on the crowd, which, according to Shaw, did not know how best to choose. The scope of choice again was limited to the plutocrats or a few adventurers who alone could afford campaign expenses and had the power to control them.

To quote Shaw:

They [the people] make a hopeless mess of their political power, running after any ambitious general or loud-enough windbag who promises to get them out of their difficulties

1. Eric Bentley, pp. 14 - 15.

by hook or by crook. Mussolini and Hitler,..., could always count on a plebiscite ninety-five per cent in their favour.¹

Thus the existing system in his eyes was something of a farce: it was a product of popular caprice always pretending to be for liberty and freedom in order to fulfil the interests of one particular class:

The cry of liberty is always on the lips of the propertied classes who own the lion's share of land and capital and have nothing to fear but nationalization of these resources, because it implies that the less government activity there is the more free people are, and because it helps to elect the thoughtless who always support the status quo because anything unusual shocks them.²

While the electorate was liable to yield to passion, the political candidates very often did not appear to be any better either. Sticking to their party line, they often lacked the experience, and capacity also,³ for practical government. Party interests and personal advantages almost always came before public welfare in those cases. Thus he took pains, and much delight too, in demonstrating that democracy was nothing but an illusion.

In what ways is democracy an illusion? Shaw started with testing Lincoln's well-known definition of democracy in his preface to The Apple Cart. He readily accepted the necessity of a government of the people and for the people. But he rejected the idea of a government by the people, for the existing political system of parliament and election known to us as democracy is only a government by the consent of the people. He therefore moved on to repudiate and shatter the

1. Fabian Essays, p. 222

2. Eric Bentley, p. 29

3. See Major Barbara, p. 127

notion that the people can ever govern themselves:

The thing is a physical impossibility. Every citizen cannot be a ruler any more than everybody can be an engine driver or a pirate king. A nation of prime ministers or dictators is as absurd as an army of field marshals. Government by the people is not and never shall be a reality: it is only a cry by which demagogues humbug us with voting for them.¹

The art of government is, of course, a highly complicated one. It is by no means within reach of everybody or anybody. Always there exists a wide difference in ability and talents. The world is full of able-minded people as well as nincompoops, and within the same vocation there are differences in degrees of ability. Shaw must be given credit for hold audaciously that against such a background of complicated varieties, both of interests and capacity, political expression of human rights in terms of government positions or responsibility is a logical impossibility.

Subjecting democracy to further scrutiny, Shaw came to call this system a humbug. He punctured what he considered to be the pompous illusion of human rights by pointing point-blank to the fact that the cabinet in reality depended on the civil service for practical functioning. And it was often the case that cabinet ministers were told by the civil service what to do. Though the smooth functioning of the civil service came closer to Shaw's concept of government, the fact that it was composed of people expensively educated showed to whom it held its responsibility. Often what Shaw meant by "to-day" in his citations of facts was actually the 1910's, nevertheless he had an excel-

1. Op. Cit., p. 10

lent grasp of the tendency of the age, and many of his criticisms remain valid even today.

What Shaw found most unsatisfactory in democracy, perhaps, was that it was pretext of the people to try to avoid as much government as possible. By doing so, laissez-faire and laissez-aller came in and affected the whole society. Productive means and riches thus fell into the hands of the plutocrats. In Shaw's own words, the wrong of democracy lies in that

... we don't want to be governed at all, and that we regard rates and taxes and rents and death duties as intolerable burdens. What we want to know is how little government we can get along with without being murdered in our beds... The only value in the matter is that the civilized way of getting along is the way of corporate action, not individual action; and corporate action involves more government than individual action.¹

The idea of corporate action was to bring about a social and economic equilibrium which is upset at present. Government, therefore, is essential. But can democracy live up to this requirement?

What we have to ask ourselves,...., is not whether we will have socialism and communism or not, but whether democracy can keep pace with the development of both that are being forced on us by the growth of national and international corporate action.²

Here Shaw is looking at democracy as a means to an end, and end of social justice and common well-being. And that has been what men have striven for through the centuries. If democracy was steering us away from this goal and causing all sorts of confusion, then it would have to be discarded.

1. The Apple Cart, p. 12

2. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

So far Shaw has been shown in the light of his severe and adverse criticism of democracy. To Shaw, democracy should mean "the organization of society for the benefit and at the expense of everybody indiscriminately and not for the benefit of a privileged class."¹ Let us examine his proposed system and remedy from the very foundation.

In order to counteract the present election system in which the electorate made all sorts of blunders in their choice of political competence, Shaw suggested the examination method to weed out the "windbags" and "blatherskites." Popular emotion may be easily humbugged by a Hitler or Mussolini, but the competent candidates alone could survive a tough examination for governmental positions. This seems to be a practicable method in discriminating the wide variation in human political ability. Only by placing the right people in the right positions, and by selecting the right people for the good of the whole community regardless of class privileges, so Shaw believed, can society succeed in getting a genuine democracy, meaning a body for the good of everybody and at the expense of one's individual advantages. It was precisely for the same reason that Shaw found the present system irresponsible.

In proposing this method of examination, Shaw again differed from the current concept of democracy. While he claimed that there would still be an election in his democracy, it was urged, however, to limit to "the naturally five per cent, guaranteed and empanelled by the next available anthropometric authority."² Through this strict

1. Everybody's Political What's What, p. 40

2. Fabian Essays, pp. 223-224.

selection Shaw hoped to achieve a severe exercise of responsibility and conscience on the part of those who governed. Later on he extended it to the electorate, who must have a more proper political knowledge before it could hope to participate in the election intelligently and unselfishly. And according to Shaw, only an examination was able to discriminate between those who were ready from those who were not. It was a rational approach based on the concept of the elite.

Although Shaw cites the Chinese experience in selecting at least the best trained people for government positions through a highly elaborate examination system, he seemed to abstain from suggesting the practical process as to what sort of examination this might be and in what manner it should be conducted. The whole examination system for such a purpose, in fact, may be easily fossilized and thus stultified, unless there is a certain period of practical training and approbation for the candidate, for one who does well in an examination does not necessarily mean a simultaneous success in practical administration. However, Shaw's precautionary measures seemed to be a constant check up by the different panels or councils which would periodically demand a report on the part of the government servants in order to avoid corruption and undue deficiencies.

Shaw proposed the multi-parliamentary alternative to supplement the existing system (here we feel the full force of the Webb's influence), so that better and more expert political and administrative decisions may be made

...in councils with competent assessors in the light of the best advice and widest information available. We shall need

regional councils, vocational councils, industrial councils, co-operative consumers' councils, financial councils, educational councils, planning and co-ordinating councils, councils for supernational affairs, all in constant session, as well as parliamentary congresses (at not too frequent intervals) to ventilate national grievances and contribute any political suggestions Mr. Everyman may be capable of.¹

And parliamentary reform included a breakdown of sexual barriers:

Democracy for women, a vital political necessity (women are much more practical and less Party ridden, being trained managerially by house-keeping and childbearing) must be secured by a constitutional Amendment making the electoral unit a man and a woman (call it the Coupled Vote); for all authoritative public body should consist of men and women in equal members if authority is to be democratic.²

By widening the basis of government, by establishing the various councils to give closer and more expert attention to the different affairs, Shaw believed that a government of the people and for the people could best be achieved. It was, however, more truly a system of elite bureaucracy.

The whole outlook of Shaw's democracy under socialism is, then, authoritative regimentation, as Eric Bentley pointed out:

In some ways the capitalist's idea of socialism as a system of bureaucracy, regimentation and tyranny is more realistic than the socialist's, always granting that by bureaucracy the capitalist means state control, by regimentation order, by tyranny that responsibility without which there can be no real reform.³

However, to Shaw, socialism does not claim to be otherwise. In fact state control, order and responsibility are the essential qualities of a civilized society working for corporate good. He emphasized,

1. Everybody's Political What's What, p. 35

2. Fabian Essays, p. 224

3. Eric Bentley, p. 39.

therefore, the necessity of the state and of government, the notion that socialism was heaven on earth and a millenium had no place in Shaw's social philosophy.

Behind this regimentation and government was Shaw's characteristic hatred of disorder and anarchism which threaten to destroy life and growth. It was the same grounds that led Shaw in 1914 to condemn the First World War in the face of high nationalism and patriotism in Great Britain. He sarcastically urged the English people to kill all the German women so as to annihilate the whole nation. He advocated the suppression of nationalism and saw in the League of Nations a sign of World government. He farsightedly supported a world police force to stop the nonsense of war, which hindered the development of socialization, destroyed life and made the evolution to superman impossible. What Shaw wrote some fifty years ago on War is more significant to us today facing the threat of total destruction of a Nuclear War:

The one danger before us that nothing can arrest but a general raising of human character through the deliberate cultivation and endowment of democratic virtue without consideration of property or class is the danger created by inventing weapons capable of destroying civilization faster than we can produce men who can be trusted to use them wisely.

Shaw had no illusion about human nature as it is, and he was impatient with fools in international politics who constantly try to lead us to confusion in order to gratify their "imperial and other anti-social instincts," national or personal. Only through order exerted by world government can we hope to escape the disaster of international chaos.

1. Eric Bentley, p. 41

Everything in Shaw was part of the component whole of his reverence for life. Shaw's philosophy of the Life Force sums up his world view which is based on the scientific evidence of biological evolution, and from here he envisaged the better race of men to come, a race furnished with better rulers who have deeper understanding and greater power of judgment. They will, with their wisdom and sanity, undertake to construct a better world.

It is perhaps paradoxical to notice that while Shaw chose to call himself an atheist and denied the existence of a God, the role he assigned to Nature which provides for us better men, and which conditions our life at large, borders perhaps, on the domain of religion. Underlying his relentless satire on present society is a faith in its capability of improvement, and a passion for this end. He wanted to clear the way for the advent of a better society which would have better or super - men in it.

CHAPTER IV

SHAW'S METHOD OF TEACHING

Insofar as Bernard Shaw denounced civil war, revolution and bloodshed in order to avoid waste and destruction, he persistently, determinedly and relentlessly waged a battle of the mind in the hope of persuading and clearing away suspicion, prejudice and illusion, and thus win people over to the practice of Fabian Socialism. It was a war of language in the forms of essays and speeches. According to Gorham Munson, a definition of propaganda "must reckon with the target, the method and the purpose of the propagandist."¹ Shaw's socialist writings may well be considered along this line. His target was the middle class Englishman, whom he found to be the timber for the purpose of leading contemporary England from catastrophe and finally to the achievement of socialism.² His method of persuasion consisted of a group of recurring traits peculiar to Shaw himself and therefore constituted at the same time the style of his polemical essays. In this chapter we hope to indicate some of the basic methods of appeal and propaganda of Shaw and test their efficacy.

The aim of mass persuasion is, of course, to ingraft certain ideas and principles in order to make people act on them. As a propagandist, Shaw realized that in order to do so, he must first make people listen to him, an experience won through the hard years of self-discipline in Hyde Park and other public meetings, and it found expression in all his polemical writings. Since the essay on rent in the Fabian

1. Gorham Munson, Twelve Decisive Battles of the Mind, New York, Greystone, 1942, p. 14

2. See Fabian Essays, p. 186; Platform and Pulpit, p. 11

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Essays was his first most important published socialist writing, and it is still available to the public and contains most of the major interest-patterns of Shaw, we shall analyze this essay and try to see how these basic interest-patterns are expressed. Then we shall go on to examine whether or not this essay is a summary of traits of expressions peculiar to the writer himself, thus to find out to what extent out of this basic design the later works arise.

Shaw deserted jargon and simplified technical subject matters in his effort to spread socialism among the uninitiated public, which is always the majority. Assuming the standpoint of an economist, Shaw begins the essay with an interesting analysis of the wide possibilities of a piece of land opening up to a primitive cultivator. Adopting an original approach in difference to the current view that any piece of land would be the solution of livelihood, Shaw finds that its fertility, barrenness or its mineral holding determines the occupant's harvest. In a laissez-faire society, a cultivator's income will depends on these conditions rather than on his own industry. "Thus" Shaw remarked, "is Man mocked by Earth his step-mother, and never knows as he tugs at her closed hand whether it contains diamonds, or flints, good red wheator a few clayey and blighted cabbages."¹ In a humourous vein Shaw shows here an ability to see the complexity of the question itself. The opening paragraph epitomizes the author's discerning power and breadth of mind.

Shaw realized that professional and technical treatments would either be too dull to attract the public, or they would be simply beyond

1. Fabian Essays, p. 3

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its grasp. In this essay he aims at a clear exposition on the subject of economics, therefore technical terms are discarded on the ground that

These terms - laws of indifferences, total utility and final utility - though admirably expressive and intelligible when you know beforehand exactly what they mean, are, taken by themselves, failures in point of lucidity and suggestiveness.¹

As a propagandist of socialist economics, Shaw considers the effect on, and the knowledge background of his addresses. This consideration conditions the general approach of the essay. The explanation of the term "margin of cultivation" stands in sharp contract to the unintelligibility of the above-mentioned economic terms. It is a superb performance of elucidation:

Let us, in the manner of the Political Economist, trace the effects of settling a country by private property with undisturbed law and order. Figure to yourself the vast green plain of a country virgin to the spade, awaiting the advent of man. Imagine then the arrival of the first colonist, the original Adam, prospecting for a suitable patch of Private Property, Adam is, as Political Economy fundamentally assumes him to be, "on the make": therefore he drives his spade into, and sets up the stockade around, the most fertile and favourably situated patch he can find. When he had tilled it, Political Economy, inspired to prophesy by the spectacle, metaphorically exhibits Adam's little patch of cultivation as a pool that will yet rise and submerge the whole land. Let us not forget this trope: it is the key to the ever-recurring phrase "margin of cultivation." And truly the pool soon spreads. Other Adams come, all on the make, and therefore all sure to pre-empt patches as near as may be to the first Adam's...And so the pool rises, and the margin spreads more and more remote from the centre, until the pool becomes a lake and the lake an inland sea.²

With clear sign-posts to lead one's thoughts, this tuneful image not

1. Fabian Essays, p. 14

2. Ibid., pp. 4-5

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only visualizes an abstract term and concept, but also shows the rise and foundation of the existing system of private property. The combination of conventional and colloquial elements (such as the phrase "on the make"), the joke on the manner of economic writings of the time and the pun on the name of Adam Smith, mocking the much honoured orthodox economy of the age, and the easy flow of expression, all crystalized the lucidity of Shaw's style and point at the effectiveness of Shaw's communication of ideas. In much the same vein, Shaw delivers his explanation of the concept of supply and demand later on in the essay.¹ His thorough digestion of the economic theories enables him to rise above mere technical approach and present to the reader an interesting as well as illuminating illustration. And this approach also precludes Shaw from original and critical contribution to the science of economics, for his task is rather that of a commentator, an expositor, and a teacher, leading us to the grasp of the implications and significance of the existing system.

The prose of Shaw is precise, economical and tightly packed with implications. His vocabulary is as vigorous as it is provocative, representing a fresh attitude by looking directly at the existing system itself. Here is his observation of capitalism:

The introduction of the capitalistic system is a sign that the exploitation of the labourer toiling for a bare subsistence wage has become one of the chief arts of life among the holders of tenant rights. It also produces a delusive promise of endless employment which blinds the proletariat to those disastrous consequences of rapid multiplication which are obvious to the small cultivator and peasant proprietor.

1. Fabian Essays, p. 12-13

2. Ibid., p. 20

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The very idea that the status quo is built upon labour exploitation and a neglect of fair-play, which is brought out very suggestively through such words as "arts of life," "delusive promise," "blinds" and "disastrous consequences" immediately breathes attack and censure. Shaw presents a definite attitude to keep the theme of socialism standing out, and he is frankly partial.

Behind this interest in economics is a force of moral passion, a sense of social justice reacting against the disregard of common fairness in contemporary society. He is too clear-sighted to be deceived by the luxury and splendour covering up the rotten reality of the existing state of things:

A New York lady, for instance, having a nature of exquisite sensibility, orders an elegant rosewood and silver coffin, upholstered in pink satin, for her dead dog. It is made: and meanwhile a live child is prowling barefooted and hunger-stunted in the frozen gutter outside. The exchange-value of the coffin is counted as part of the national wealth; but a nation which cannot afford food and clothing for its children cannot be allowed to pass as wealthy because it has provided a coffin of a dead dog.¹

Here Shaw is echoing Ruskin's idea that "there is no wealth but life."² By putting subtly side by side two contrasting incidents, Shaw cut the ground under the existing economic and social system, which glaringly lacks a sense of proportion in matters of hunger and life. The "exquisite sensibility" of that wealthy New York lady becomes a standing joke, mocking the social conscience of the community at large.

He repudiated the Malthusian theory of population, maintain-

1. Fabian Essays, p. 21

2. John Ruskin, Unto This Last, Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy, London, George Allen, 1909, p. 156.

ing that this is caused by our toleration of social injustice and unfair distribution. He accused the capitalists and thrust before them the harm they had done to the poor, and ironically, to themselves also:

But indeed the more you degrade the workers, robbing them of all artistic enjoyment, and all chances of self-respect and admiration from their fellows, the more you throw them back, reckless, on the one pleasure and one human tie left to them - the gratification of their instinct for producing fresh supplies of men. You will applaud this instinct as divine until at last the excessive supply becomes a nuisance: there comes a plague of men; and you suddenly discover that the instinct is diabolic, and set up a cry of "over population." But your slaves are beyond caring for your cries: they breed like rabbits; and their poverty breeds filth, ugliness, dishonesty, disease, obscenity, drunkenness and murder... You withdraw in disgust to the other end of the town from them; you set your life apart from theirs by class barrier you can devise; and yet they swarm about you still... They poison your life as remorselessly as you have sacrificed theirs heartlessly.¹

The theme of poverty and social injustice crops up time and again like a counterpoint calling attention to the notoriety of the capitalist exploitation of life and wealth. With consecutive, epigrammatic and clear-cut expression and self-confidence in his belief in common well-being, Shaw charges the theory of over-population and succeeds in creating an overwhelming and assuring impression even to a reader of the 1960's, to whom the problem of population means more than a problem of economic distribution and social justice.

The method of Shaw's propaganda then is composed of elucidation of economics on the one hand, aiming at a better understanding on the part of the reader of the operation of the present society so as to know how best to remedy it, and on the other hand, is his attack of the

1. Fabian Essays, p. 20.

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status quo, motivated by a moral passion for justice and a determination that such conditions must be corrected. Yet they are intertwined and compose the layout of the whole essay.

But his tactics for attack vary from place to place as the situation may demand. He may aim to produce a painful sense of shame on the propertied idlers who are responsible as a class for existing social grievances, and push into deeper self-scrutiny by stripping off their mask of hypocrisy and waking them up from self-deception:

...since they still depend on their tenants' labour for their subsistence, they continue to pay Labour, with a capital L, a certain meed of mouth honour; and the resultant association of prosperity with idleness, and praise with industry, practically destroys morality by setting up that incompatibility between conduct and principle which is the secret of the ingrained cynicism of our time, and which produces curious Ricardian phenomenon of the man of business who goes on Sunday to the church with the regularity of the village blacksmith, there to renounce and abjure before his God the line of conduct which he intends to pursue with all his might during the following week.¹

He calls to aid sarcasm, irony and iconoclasm in his denunciation of the propertied idlers. He points at the economic fact of destitution arising out of exploiting, which either because of self-deception, or confusion of the mind, the idlers tend to forget. By telling the truth, Shaw succeeds in shaming "the devil." The moral fervor finds its way into the heart of the reader.

In his appraisal of the ineffectual approach to social problems of the 19th century Englishman, Shaw tries to open the eyes of the public to the urgent necessity of removing the existing economic

1. Fabian Essays, p. 7

absurdity and indignity by railing at the practice of escapism including the notion of compensation in the next world. Shaw's contempt is calculated, for in doing so, he refutes the last resort of the anti-socialist, who might resign himself to the consolation of religion instead of taking up social reforms:

It was pleasant to believe that the chance we were too lazy to take in this world would come back to us in another. It was pleasant to believe that a benevolent hand was guiding the steps to society; overruling all evil appearances for good; and making poverty here the earnest of a great blessedness and reward hereafter. It was pleasant to lose the sense of worldly inequality in the contemplation of our equality before God.¹

Then he moves on to criticize the make-belief in Nature at a time when the evolutionary theory challenged the authority of religion in the mid-nineteenth century, such as that Nature is cruel and indifferent to mankind; and this points at the same ineffectualness towards working out a social solution, for "It kept our eyes still shut to the truth that there is no cruelty and selfishness outside Man himself; and that his own active benevolence can combat and vanquish both."² Shaw may appear blasphemous and irreligious in the course of his criticism of the idea of God and the next world, and this is quite in keeping with his confession of being an atheist, however, his intention is clear: he tries to state emphatically, even to the degree of offending one's religious sensibility, that our salvation lies in social reform here and now. This is a favourite practice of Shaw: to attempt to startle the public into listening to him and later acting on the principles of

1. Fabian Essays, p. 26.

2. Ibid., p. 26

socialism, even at the expense of exaggerating his statements:

It was always necessary to overstate a case startingly to make people sit up and listen to it, and to frighten them into acting on it. I do this myself habitually and deliberately.¹

Shaw aims at grounding in socialism and a fresh approach to morality for his public, his end qualifies his means. He exposes illusions, clarifies a confusion of the mind, and always pushes on with persistent assaults on the vicious and ridiculous state of things in our society. Even in the midst of his relatively mild exposition and analysis of economics, Shaw uses a debating style to topple his opponents and appeal to the sense of their own virtues of his followers.

In the foregoing pages, efforts have been made to show in what manner Shaw handles his method of persuasion in the essay on rent. Such characteristics as visual clarity in his perception of human affairs, especially the economic system in the present case, which gives rise to iconoclasm as well as illuminating analysis of the capitalist world, the eloquence and confidence in his attacks against the existing economic vices, the moral passion, the method of irony, sarcasm and abuses which heighten our interest and yield us to his argument, are found to be prevailing there. The question which now confronts us is to what extent is this essay a summing up of Shaw's stylistic traits; in other words, to what extent do these elements or characteristics recur in Shaw's polemical writings?

In his essay on transition, included in this same volume of Fabian Essays, Shaw looked at the case for socialism from a historical

1. Everybody's Political What's What?, p. 49.

point of view. Always keeping "social Democracy" within our view, Shaw demonstrates the trend of development is moving toward socialism by a calm presentation of historical facts, such as the Reform Bills since 1831 and the Trade Union movements afterwards. He then proceeds to make a forceful case for the application of socialism by putting forward unequivocally and rationally the alternatives of municipal democracy and gradual transition on the one hand and the chaotic consequences of revolution on the other. The argument against immediate seizure or restoration of rent and land to the people is that they are not yet fully prepared to manipulate the funds and other resources fully and adequately. For if being forced by the sudden changes of economic system,

...the Chancellor of Exchequer would have three courses open to him. (1) He could give the money back again to the landlords and capitalist with an apology. (2) He could attempt to start State industries with it for the employment of the people. (3) Or he could simply distribute it among the unemployed. The last is not to be thought of: anything is better than panem et circenses. The second (starting state industries) would be far too vast an undertaking to get on foot soon enough to meet the urgent difficulty. The first (the return with an apology) would be reductio ad absurdum of the whole affair - a confession that the private proprietor, for all his idleness and his voracity, is indeed performing an indispensable economic function - the function of capitalizing however wastefully and viciously, the wealth which surpasses his necessarily limited power of immediate personal consumption.¹

Underlying this analytic approach to the possible but alarming consequences of drastic transformation, a method by straining it to its logical extreme, is an appeal to sanity, a persuasion of the acceptance of permeation or constitutionalism. This is, however, covered by an irony and satire warning the public that any immediate realization of

1. Fabian Essays, pp. 176 - 177

socialism is not as rosy as it looks, for the road is full of traps. "Cautious" and "gradual" changes therefore along stand out as the guide rope.

The analytic approach and emphasis on rationalism likewise predominate The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism. The first fifteen chapters of the book are largely an attempt to examine the capitalist society from the point of view of distribution. The seven methods he sums up as man's efforts and attempt at solving distribution are presented with utmost clarity and in a highly instructive manner. Colloquial expression and apt examples are the key to his method of explanation. For example, here is Shaw's explanation of the term "laissez-faire":

It is like sitting idly in a carriage when the horse is running away. You can excuse it by saying "What else can I do?"; but your impotence will not avert a smash. People in that predicament must all think hard of some way of getting control of the horse, and meanwhile do all they can to keep the carriage right side up and out of the ditch.

The policy of letting things alone, in the practical sense that the Government should never interfere with business or go into business₁ itself, is called laissez-faire by economist and politicians.

In concretizing an abstract theory and compressing the actuality of a capitalist society into an image, Shaw is repeating the method he employed in the rent essay in regard to "margin of cultivation," only here he goes further in kindling an urgency to reform the chaotic status quo.

The object of this book, as Shaw declared, is "elucidatory." Yet in dealing with the phenomenon and system which we confront in

1. Op. Cit., p. 40.

our everyday life such as the capitalist system, the distribution methods, the state of poverty and necessity of evolution to, or realization of socialism, Shaw assumes a particular point of view, and presents it with great originality. And this power is summed up in his perceptive definitions which pervade the book, for instance his definition of "freedom":

There is one thing that we all desire: and that is freedom. By this we mean freedom from any obligation to do anything except just what we like, without a thought of tomorrow's dinner or any other of the necessities that make a slave of us.¹ We are free only as long as we can say "My time is my own."

Analyzing freedom from the standpoint of economics, the disposal of our time in terms of whether we can afford it or not economically, Shaw with his discerning power, leads us to question freedom in concrete terms, based on a tangible measure of daily care and necessity. We may accuse Shaw of uttering only half of the truth, as freedom may mean more than an emancipation from the needs of living and implies habits, conscience and freewill. Yet Shaw is clearly and emphatically stating the other side of the coin which may have been completely ignored. This independent approach to a well-beaten subject, which dominates the whole book, gives at the same time an original flavour to Shaw's polemical writings as a whole. The ideas appear so fresh and distinctive that we are impressed as well as inspired by his intellectual perception..

Reinforcing Shaw's persuasion of the public to embrace socialism is the note of rationalism which he constantly harped on and which appeals to the practical nature of the Englishman. It is an insight which forms an integral part of Shaw's approach to social reform,

1. The Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 77

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for he gives priority to the necessities of daily life and emphasizes the avoidance of drastic economic changes which threaten routine operation of the majority of a society. He advocates the confiscation of the big trusts as the first stage of transition for it is they which monopolize the nation's industries and wealth, and are the source of all the existing troubles in distribution:

Whilst we are nationalizing the big industries and the wholesale business we may have to leave a good many unofficial retailers to carry on the work of petty distribution much as we do at present, except that we may control them in the matter of prices as the Trusts do, whilst allowing them a better living than the landlords and capitalists allow them, and relieving them from the continual fear of bankruptcy inseparable from the present system. We shall nationalize the mines long before we nationalize the village smithy and make the village blacksmith a public official.¹

The notes of rationalism, sanity and sympathy make the course of gradual change enticing and remove the fear of the petite bourgeoisie may have in the course of economic rearrangement. The future security the middle-class Englishmen enjoy, which is offered in a practical and thus realizable manner, challenges the existing chaos of private competition. Shaw is a staunch preacher of transition. He may be impatient with the contemporary speed to socialism; he may be exploring the various better means of realizing socialization, including revolution; and that G.D.H. Cole to criticise Shaw for lack of interest in transition;² yet as a "fact-facing" Irishman,³ Shaw fully recognizes the need of transition

1. The Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 386.

2. See G.D.H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought, Vol. 3, Part 1, p. 212.

3. Bernard Shaw, John Bull's Other Island and Major Barbara, New York, Bretano's, 1908, p. xi.

by instalments, for all construction must take time to complete.

Shaw's conscientious effort to explain socialism in terms of fairer distribution of national wealth, class intermarriage, better eugenics, and political and social evolution, his comprehensive criticism of democracy and capitalist civilization, and the swift exposition of contemporary economic situations and the pests of poverty and inequality make this book a "most precise and limpid writing" of Shaw, and was hailed by Edmund Wilson as "the classic of socialist writing."¹

The same themes are repeated in Everybody's Political What's What?. It is a summary of Shaw's political and economic thinking in a span of over sixty years. Again it is presented in daily language within the reach of everybody, for he wanted it to be studied as a political handbook by everybody, including politicians and legislators, with a view of training the statesman. He pleads again and again for the growth of human lives;² he hammers on the necessity of a basic national income figure with his lucid analytic power of expression;³ he envisages a welfare state in a practical manner;⁴ and he proposes a panel system for the selection of the best brains and the best administrators,⁵ trusting that that will help build a better government; finally, all these are to lead to the advent of the superman, the best eugenic result man can hope to achieve through his own effort and Na-

1. Edmund Wilson, "Bernard Shaw at Eight," from George Bernard Shaw: a Critical Survey, ed. by L. Kronenberger, Cleveland, the World Publishing Co., 1953, pp. 135, 131.

2. Op. Cit., pp. 244, 247.

3. Op. Cit., p. 63

4. Op. Cit., p. 174

5. Op. Cit., p. 352

ture's Providence. These ideas are found to be recurring in one way or another in Shaw's polemical writings. In doing so, Shaw fulfilled Gorham Munson's qualification of propaganda as "overwhelming insistence upon a theory until it prevails upon the masses."¹

So much for the elucidatory elements in Shaw. He speaks to the readers on their own terms. But along with the pedagogue who commands a lucid, suggestive and analytic style is Shaw the iconoclast. He pays no respect to an existing authority or ideal, merely because it is universally accepted or respected. The existing system, because it is already there, may assume an appearance of matter of natural necessity to people who are accustomed to and conditioned by it. Most people do not think things through, nor do they see things as they really are. They are rather apt to take things as they appear. Shaw had an exceptionally clear and sharp vision and thinking. He sees through the appearance and illusion which clothes the truth and bewilders us. He takes it his duty to strip it off and thrust to us the naked truth in a challenging and provoking manner. And he also summons to his assistance sarcasm, irony, satire and invective. These elements are intertwined with his exposition of economics and socialism, and because of their very manner of presentation, they plunge us into deeper and more serious thinking, which, oftentimes, may well be the first time we ever do so in our lives in regard to the existing system.

Satire in Shaw's polemical writings is a double process, for by wrapping up his censorious criticism in a coat of humour and laughter

1. Gorham Munson, p. 91

Shaw the iconoclast meanwhile is skilfully reducing the disapproved situation into mere absurdity. Here, for example, is his satire on democracy:

You will notice that I am too polite to call Demos a wind-bag or a hot air merchant; but I am going to ask you to begin our study of Democracy by considering it first as a big balloon, filled with gas or hot air, and sent up so that you shall be looking up at the sky whilst other people are picking your pockets. When the balloon comes down to earth every five years or so you are invited to get into the basket if you can throw out one of the people who are sitting tightly in it; but as you can afford neither the time nor the money, there are forty millions of you and hardly room for six hundred in the basket, the balloon goes up again with much the same lot in it and leaves you where you were before. I think you will admit that the balloon as an image of democracy corresponds to the parliamentary facts.¹

In a humorous vein and with great delicacy as if he were unwilling to present the naked truth, Shaw slyly induces us to think of democracy in terms of windbags, emptiness and illusion, and to come to the conclusion that it is a humbug at the expense of people's interests. Any forthright remarks of this kind, however true they may be, would simply invite popular and hostile repudiation, because we have perhaps too much unquestioned respect for democracy, and in our age, particularly, we have been constantly threatened by illiberalism. As a satirist, Shaw contrives to overcome obstacles of this kind by means of visual attraction and detached amusement derived from it, for visual concretization tends to plant in our mind much easier than abstract reasoning. This method of concrete presentation is not only reflecting the image of "margin of cultivation," but is also a recurring trait in Shaw's socialist writings.²

1. The Apple Cart, p. 9

2. See The Intelligent Woman's Guide, pp. 315-316, Platform & Pulpit, p. 6.

Characterizing Fabian Socialism as a practical approach to social problems and reform, Shaw denounces and satirizes those socialists who are at a loss for a practical method to realize their ideal society. He criticizes H.M. Hyndman whom he found to be misled by a dream of the future, beautiful but ineffectual, and the criticism is charged with satiric intent:

He had looked forward to socialism as a state of things in which nobody will ever be hungry or cold or ill or ignorant or in any sort of trouble. He had been taught to believe in heaven and hell; and instead of examining these beliefs and rejecting them as fabulous he had simply transferred them to socialism and capitalism. Instead of a State in which everybody will have to work he had envisaged a moneyless state in which nobody will work.¹

By contrasting the ineffectualness of Hyndman's romantic notion of a moneyless state of idlers with the practical outlook of Fabian Socialism as a doctrine of work, Shaw succeeds in lampooning impractical socialists with Hyndman as a symbol.

In order to make Fabian Socialism stand out as the only alternative to the existing system, Shaw the propagandist makes jokes on the high-flown idealism and enthusiasm of the revolutionary socialists:

The young Socialist is apt to be catastrophic in his view - to plan the revolutionary programme as an affair of twenty-four lively hours, with Individualism in full swing on Monday morning, a tidal wave of the insurgent proletariat on Monday afternoon, and socialism in complete working order on Tuesday.²

By striking constantly at the impossible, Shaw ridicules the ignorance of the radical socialists, and delights his audience by appealing to their rationalism with perhaps even a sense of superiority. He there-

1. Everybody's Political What's What?, p. 67.

2. Fabian Essays, p. 170

fore hoaxes the radicals as much as he amuses and impresses his audience.

Here Shaw is manipulating his weapon of irony. A sense of humour in realizing the folly of over-earnestness of the radicals urges us to laugh. But Shaw also assails faults and vices by inflicting pain. Here is a specimen of sarcasm:

If poverty does not matter as long as it is contended, then crimes does not matter as long as it is unscrupulous. The truth is that only then it does matter most desperately. Many persons are more comfortable when they are dirty than when they are clean; but that does not recommend dirt as a national policy.¹

In a tone of inversion, Shaw brands the urgent idea of abolishing poverty and establishing order and sanitation on the reader. And he does this in a epigrammatic and magnificent manner: the sentences are short and forceful, there is no apology in the presentation of his ideas, even though they may appear incompatible, yet in yoking them together Shaw launches a case against the existence of poverty.

Perhaps the most memorable and remarkable piece of sarcasm and irony is "The Common Sense About the War." At the high tide of nationalism and patriotism in 1914, when people were indulging in a romantic expression of enmity, Shaw, out of visual clarity and hatred of waste and destruction, preaches peace courageously at the risk of causing misunderstanding and enmity. Underlying his courage and integrity is a belief that people are badly educated politically as well as economically, and that they need further education.² So at the sup-

1. Plays Unpleasant, p. 204

2. Everybody's Political What's What?, p. 345

reme moment of self-righteousness and enthusiasm of the crowd, Shaw pours cold water by shaking their complacency and clearing their muddle-headedness:

All we need do is kill, say 75 per cent of all the women in Germany under sixty. Then we may leave Germany her fleet and money, and say "Much good may they do you."... War is not an affair of sentiment...it is not more cowardly to kill a woman than to kill a man. And there is only one reason why it is a greater crime to kill a woman than a man, and why women have to be spared and protected where men are exposed and sacrificed. The reason is that the destruction of women is the destruction of the community. Men are comparatively of no account, kill ninety per cent of the German men, and the remaining ten per cent can repeople her. But kill the women, and Delenda est Carthago. Now this is exactly what our militarists want to happen to Germany. Therefore the objection to killing women becomes in this case the reason for doing it.¹

Out of sneers and contempt for the militarists emerges a love of peace and life, which transcends hatred and bellicosity. By pointing out the purpose of war and stretching to its logical conclusion, calmly and impartially, Shaw demonstrates the nonsense of war, and the method here is reminiscent of Swift's in "A Modest Proposal."

Common sense, integrity and belief in improvement constitute the basis of Shaw's denunciation of the contemporary world and give vent to his invective. This trait is prevalent in his socialist essays and prefaces. For example in his preface to Immaturity:

Poverty is theft; respectability founded on poverty is blasphemy; marriage founded on property is prostitution; it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.²

It is a superb tirade on the exploiting rich. With short sentences,

1. Bernard Shaw, "Common Sense About the War," in What I Really Wrote About the War, London, Constable, 1931, pp. 72 - 73.

2. See Eric Bentley, p. 85.

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terse, well ordered and balanced, and with the intention to challenge contemporary moral standard and to incite shame, Shaw passes on judgment and denunciation with utmost confidence. Each idea falls on our mind like the stroke of a pounding hammer. In the preface to Major Barbara, he showers attacks on contemporary social vices using his animation of the theory of rent:

Practically all the spare money in the country consists of a mass of rent, interest and profit, every penny of which is bound up with crime, drink, prostitution, disease and all the evil fruits of poverty as inextricably as with enterprise, wealth, commercial prosperity.¹

The force of Shaw's abuse of the existing state of things often comes from the fact that he calls a spade a spade. As an iconoclast, he shows intolerance of the specious disguise of the economic situation. He portrays the actual state of its operation which is ugly and hideous. He is bent on changing society and by means of forceful terms of denunciation, Shaw points at reform as the only solution. Again in Mrs. Warren's Profession, Shaw the iconoclast holds up the mirror to show the vice and ignorance of certain people and said in the preface that

Play Mrs. Warren's Profession to an audience of clerical members of the Christian Social Union and of women well experienced in rescue, Temperance and Girl's Club Work, and no moral panic will arise: every man and woman present will know that as long as poverty makes virtue hideous and the spare pocket-money of rich bachelordom makes vice dazzling, their daily hand-to-hand fight against prostitution with prayer and persuasion, shelter and scanty alms, will be a losing one.²

He points at the need of remedy from the very root of the matter: to

1. Op. cit., p. xvi.

2. Plays Unpleasant, p. 181 - 182.

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abolish poverty by rearranging the society economically. He forces his case against his opponents who banned his play by confounding them with the suggestion of their hidden connexion, which is highly possible, with the whole morbid affair of prostitution:

It is true that in Mrs. Warren's Profession, Society, and not any individual, is the villain of the piece; but it does not follow that the people who take offence at it are all champions of society. Their credentials cannot be too carefully examined.¹

It is a magnificent ending to the preface which is characterized by a superb debating style. Shaw smashes his opponents by placing them in a dilemma - a choice between two undesirable alternatives: lifting the ban on the play, or the unpleasant associations of vices with their credentials. Both of them are powerful propaganda against the existing system.

Shaw was an equally effective propagandist at the oral medium of mass persuasion. In fact, as a young man, he lectured every Sunday, without pay, on any subject, "anywhere within a radius of fifty or sixty miles from London, more frequently than not paying his travel expenses out of pocket."² He lectured on street corners, at the gates of the East India docks, in public squares and Hyde Park. Facing a wandering crowd, he developed a skill in stimulating their interest, holding their attention and gaining, in many cases, their sympathy for, and faith in, the Fabian type of social reforms. Public speaking had therefore opened up to him a series of opportunities and experience in handl-

1. Plays Unpleasant, p. 208

2. Platform and Pulpit, p. ix.

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ing the public, which were extremely useful to him later on in his career as a pamphleteer.

Although Dan H. Laurence's collection, Platform and Pulpit contains but a limited number of Shaw's speeches on socialism, and only one specimen of those in the decade of the 1880's, yet the selections are quite representative of Shaw's activities as a speaker throughout his career. The speech on "Proprietors and Slaves" delivered early in 1885 before the members of the Liberal and Social Union gives a foretaste of the essays on rent and transition in the Fabian Essays. Shaw often repeats his ideas in various differing forms. In fact, he frankly admitted that behind every speech there were some important points made in previous lectures, and the case is true also of his socialist writings.¹ His approach to economics here in the speech, as in the rent essay, was based on man's access to land as the basic means of sustenance. From that he derives his interesting and provoking exposition and definition of slavery:

It is known to us all that the land of England today, excepting the barren highroads and a few patches of common which have accidentally not stolen, is owned by private persons. The rest of the community are therefore the slaves of those private persons, or of the capitalists to whom they are sublet their powers in order that they may ultimately resume them in a more effective state of development. We are, then divided into two great sections: proprietors and slaves.²

A person, then, who does not have the access to land is under the category of slave, be he a doctor or a shepherd. The flagrant state of in-

1. See "How to Train for Public Life," History of Fabian Society, p. 78

2. Platform and Pulpit, p. 2

justice is demonstrated with penetration and perception, yet, with suggestive language, it breathes attack at the same time.

As a speaker, Shaw was blessed with a prodigious memory, self-confidence and imperturbability. He liked to speak extempore and provoked arguments and exchange of repartees. His examples, personal or otherwise, are apt, and show also his imperturbability:

I have myself disgracefully consumed in idleness so much of the wealth produced by peasants from the soil they tilled, that they have been left far poorer than I, who did nothing for them. Yet I have never been reproached for this. On the contrary, I should have been far more highly esteemed and courted had I been able to plunder three or four hundred peasants instead of one or two.¹

This daringly frank remark and self-reference not only focuses our attention on the ridiculous fact of social injustice, but also gives forth an emotive power by means of humour, sarcasm and conviction which brings out in us an admiration for his audacity and honesty. It is a technique of iconoclasm, recurring in the first chapters of the Everybody's Political What's What; for by being frank, he wins our sympathy and approval of his view on socialism subsequently.

The samples of speeches on socialism in Platform and Pulpit illustrate the growth of interests from economics to governmental reforms and attacks on democracy. The fact that Shaw keeps repeating his themes, such as poverty, exploitation, rent, fair distribution, and Fabian Socialism demonstrates a constant effort to emphasize the ideas of a better society on his public. His gift of language and his ability to present his criticism in concrete, and oftentimes visual terms, save him from boring his public. In comparing the parliamentary system

1. Platform and Pulpit, p. 1

to a locomotive engine in The Praise of Guy Fawkes (1932), Shaw says with a description of the construction of the engine:

To prevent that pressure from blowing the boiler to bits there is a hole in the boiler which is closed with a spring strong enough to resist the pressure needed to move the train; but if the pressure goes beyond that, the spring lifts and the steam evaporates. This contrivance is called a safety-valve. Now, the only difference between the parliamentary locomotive and the engineers' locomotive is that the safety valve in the parliamentary locomotive is made so extremely weak that it blows off in hot air before there is the slightest possibility of the train moving at all.¹

The same pattern of visualization is echoing the pool and the balloon images in the rent essay and the preface to the Apple Cart respectively. Summing up technical subject matters in concrete terms, Shaw ridicules political limitations through satiric analogy.

Epigrams, paradoxes and aphorisms are impressive forms for expressing ideas, and they are amply used by Shaw in the midst of his explication of theories to lock our interests and sway our opinions. By means of sinewy and rhetorical language, and sometimes by arrangement of ideas in a mutually exclusive fashion, Shaw succeeds in confounding an opponent's thesis pithily as self-contradictions. For example, to quote Shaw from his various speeches on socialism in Platform and Pulpit:

...the best doctors waste their superior skill in preserving the lives of idlers whose existence is an evil, whilst the worst doctors are busy killing useful and industrious men. Thus the reward of the best man is the privilege of ministering the worst.²

Salvation is a continuous operation, like breathing. If you stop breathing for five minutes you are dead; if you stop saving yourself for ten minutes you are damned.³

1. Platform and Pulpit, p. 236.

2. Op. cit., p. 3.

3. Op. cit., p. 97

If all the world were parcelled out into a beautiful mosaic of fertile fields large enough to be managed by a single pair like Adam and Eve, then, no doubt, if every man and woman were a born farmer and farmer's wife, if we limit the population and we exclude the Chinese [...], then we shall abolish slavery and we shall abolish starvation.¹

Civil war is horrible, but we have supped full of horrors in city slums, and an open, well-ventilated battlefield, with wounded men instead of rickety children and starving women, would be about the same, and the suffering would be less prolonged, whilst excitement and hope would take the place of dullness and despair.²

Under our capitalist class system every Englishman dislikes every other Englishman so much that it is hardly necessary to pay him to kill: you have to make severe laws to prevent him from killing.³

Shaw compresses together several warring concepts and fragments in building up a new persuasive point of view, and the ingredients of wit, sarcasm and irony are persuasive. This particular aspect in Shaw's remarks and observations brings us face to face with the charges that Shaw is a "half-truth merchant." To this Shaw answers, "truths, like other things, have two sides, and most people can only see one side at a time. I have often had to turn the other side of familiar truth to the spectator."⁴ Furthermore, in assuming a new perspective in his observation and simplifying the whole process of circuitous reasoning and explanation, Shaw is thus enabled by its freshness and sharpness to give forth a swing to oratory to his speeches.

Shaw's oral and written attack on existing systems through

1. Platform and Pulpit, p. 10

2. Op. cit., p. 97

3. Op. cit., p. 257

4. Platform and Pulpit, p. xiii.

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sarcasm, irony, invective and satire forms an organic part of his comprehensive analysis and criticism of contemporary civilization. He challenges his public, provokes it, irritates it and baffles it into seeing the very root of the sin and ugliness of modern society. There is no courtship in this method, for Shaw does not deign to lower himself to coax the public into accepting his ideas. Shaw is a dauntless iconoclast and a fierce destroyer of illusion, images and false beliefs, such as democracy, romanticism and high opinion of medicine. He wants to teach something more true and more practical, such as better social conditions with the support of equality of income and a government that really sees to its administrative problems and the needs of the people. In the course of defying misconception of social and economic vices, he relentlessly disregards the public's feeling and challenges their accepted format of opinions and ideas by posing disbelief, as Eric Bentley remarks:

"I do not believe in democracy." This from Bernard Shaw! The things he pretends not to believe in for the sake of irritating his public are of course precisely the things he believes in most ardently. But they have been degraded till the words mean the opposite of what they originally meant. The contradiction here is not in Shaw but in society at large.¹

There is idealism in Shaw's iconoclasm, for Shaw wants to return to the substance of the ideal, and not to empty talk about it. The contradiction not only lies in society itself but it is also the core of Shaw's method of teaching and his style. He adopts the speaking voice and rhythm, colloquial expressions and the rhetorical tools of satire, irony, epigram and invective. They are at work interchangeably and

1. Eric Bentley, p. 72.

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consistently in his polemical essays and speeches, now instructive and indoctrinating, now provocative and irritating, but it is always a question of tactics aiming at people's acceptance and practice of socialism. And there is always an abundant sense of humour which points at the ridiculous situation without being bloody. To quote J.B.

Priestley in summing up Shaw's style:

He had hammered out for himself a superb debating style which was equally suitable for dramatic speech of polemical essays and never too far away from the stage or the platform; a style with a challenging and provocative tone in it, good enough for anything except dubieties and fine shades, in which the author has no interest. It is a manner that apparently carries provocation to a point and yet in fact never really offensive. The blows rain down on us, but we never bleed. Somewhere behind the abrupt attack is a smiling magnanimity, just as behind the hammering and smashing style there is a voice that is enchanting and irresistible on the platform.¹

The platform and the polemical essays open the possibilities to Shaw for the practice of speech and economic political analysis, and together they frame the art and thought-content of a number of his plays, and it is in this sense that economics is basic to Shaw's dramatic art as anatomy to Michaelangelo's sculpture and painting.

1. J.B. Priestley, "Shaw as a Social Critic," The Saturday Review of Literature, July 27, 1946, p. 5.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Fabianism is the British form of socialism. From the historical point of view, it is a continuation of the reform movements first set up in 1831 in Great Britain to achieve expansion of franchise. Constitutionalism is its hallmark in reshaping the social order. But instead of staking their hope and efforts on contemporary political parties for social and economic improvements, Fabian reformers, in a true British fashion, explored these possibilities through new independent channels. Though Shaw, Sidney and Beatrice Webb base their economic theory on John Stewart Mill, Henry George, Jevons and Ricardo, they envisage a different method of distribution with municipal control of industries and the rent of land; and they hold that this can only be brought into being through gradual reform in government and parliament; destruction and bloodshed only hamper its advent. Fabian Socialists, therefore, are firm believers in practical constructive work, and because of that they have infinite contempt for the high flown idealists who resort to revolutionary means and fail to produce a practical solution to social problems. Thus in emphasizing the practicality of reform measures, Fabianism suits the realistic character of the British people.

Fabianism differs from communism in its approach to domestic and international problems; it looks at economic reform primarily as a matter of domestic interest rather than as an international mission through revolution. Its scope tends to be local and therefore relatively decentralized, for instead of state control of the national resources

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and means of production, Fabian Socialists advocate municipal ownership in order that social, economic and industrial problems may be better supervised and conducted. Peaceful parliamentary reforms are found the best means towards the completion of a welfare state.

Though Shaw once favoured revolution as a method to speed up the realization of socialism, his integrity as a Fabian Socialist is not to be questioned. He never accepts the belief that history is made up of a series of class wars; nor does he try to provide a scheme in order to impose a universal practice of Fabianism, as Communism persistently strives to do. It is true that Shaw advocates world government supported by a police force, but then what Shaw envisages is a sort of world federation in the pattern of the British Commonwealth. His intention is to secure peace in the face of tidal waves of nationalism which tend to destroy human society. Socialism, according to Shaw, not only promotes the living conditions of a society but also avoids waste in talents. Able people should take control of the organs of the future society in accordance to their varied ability. Shaw believes that in the course of peaceful evolution and class intermarriage made possible by socialism, the best eugenic result of the human race will be realized, and Shaw calls this better race "the superman," who will be able to steer the world towards the goal of social well-being.

Shaw's ideas, in this light, are linked together with one common aim to promote life. But one must admit that Shaw does nothing in his writings to set up his own philosophical system in the manner of a political philosopher or economist. To quote Eric Bentley:

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...Shaw did not try to beat the political thinkers on their own ground, did not try to lay down a complete scheme of political reform, or descriptive sociology but touched on all these subjects supplying a fact or idea that had been overlooked, pointing to a subterfuge or a self-deception, laying bare hidden assumption, and the like.¹

In Shaw we find rather an abundance of sparkling ideas about the subject of socialism and reform fitted into the mosaic of his socialist works.

In fact, in the Fabian Society, Shaw is primarily a propagandist. His task is to convert both the reactionaries to give up obstructing economic and political transition, and the radical revolutionaries to renounce breaking up the status quo by crude force. It is a difficult business; for all he can reveal to the mass is a programme of slow reform, humdrum and undramatic.

But thanks to his literary gifts and Irish wit, Shaw succeeds in shaping contemporary climate of thought in favour of social reform. Shaw is a master of clear exposition. His style is concise, and he delivers his materials and arguments with deep conviction. In his efforts to attract and enlighten the public, Shaw avoids unduly technical terms and jargon, and he presents his case for socialism and political reform in a digested and colloquial manner.

However, exposition in Shaw is interwoven with attacks on social injustice. In the essay on rent in The Fabian Essays we find a clear example of Shaw's method of persuasion, out of which derive his later polemical works, such as The Intelligent Woman's Guide and

1. Eric Bentley, p. 70

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Everybody's Political What's What. Satire, irony, humour, sarcasm and invective are his weapons of attack and propaganda. It is a war of ideas. Imagery and epigrams seasoned with jokes not only delight the audience but also tend to pop up repeatedly in their mind because of their memorable qualities. By ridiculing daringly the accepted beliefs of the public and by portraying faithfully the naked horror of poverty, exploitation and prostitution, Shaw aims at shaming the crowd into action. Shaw is an iconoclast; he pokes fun at the ignorance of the masses and irritates their moral, religious and social sensibilities. He punctures the illusion of the contemporary British Government: its democracy and its statesmanship. He is untiring in demonstrating that socialism is the sole hope of salvation. In uniting the pedagogue and iconoclast in his writings, Shaw prevails upon the indifference, the hostility, or the ignorance of a public, and succeeds in inducing the recognition of social reform.

Having infused the British public with Fabianism and a conscientious but original way of looking at morality and society, Shaw has suffered since his death an eclipse in his popularity and reputation. Today many people may perhaps find much of Shaw's work dated, and his socialist writings would certainly come under this category. But though his criticism may lose part of its original pungency, yet it is so because much of the evil criticised has already been removed through his unfailing and persistent efforts. Paradoxically enough, in the very datedness of Shaw's socialist works lies also their lastingness; for here Shaw captures and depicts the vices and abuses in an

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in-between stage when one social system becomes obsolete and another is yet to begin. Man falls the prey of his own selfishness and greed. Shaw's socialist work is the keystone to these two different ages and systems. It is an heroic record of how the discontented intellectuals in the 1880's in England were stirred to bring about a better society. Moreover, the social and economic absurdities Shaw satirizes and attacks recur perpetually in societies fumbling their way to a better social order. Shaw's diagnosis of a corrupted social and economic system and his persistence in fighting against it will be a source of inspiration to people of all climes despite the barriers of geography and language.

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ABSTRACTA

The first chapter deals with the relation of Shaw to the political and economic problems of the Victorian age. As a socialist, Shaw was very much indebted to such writers as Carlyle, Ruskin and Dickens. In the field of economics, he was influenced by Jevons, Ricardo, Henry George and Karl Marx. The chapter is intended to serve as a reminder so that the reader may be better able to place Shaw in the proper Victorian setting, as Shaw's intellectual background and formative influences are frequently more Victorian than modern.

The second chapter contains a brief history of the Fabian Society, and an account of Henry George's influence on Shaw, the complementary relationship between Shaw, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and the Shaw-and-Wells relationship, and finally the dispute between Shaw and his Distributist friends Chesterton and Belloc.

In dealing with the social, economic and political ideals and principles of Shaw in Chapter Three, it is proposed to approach the problem from the standpoint of life, as the word "economics" means in its widest sense a "science of man's temporal well-being." From this point of view, it is hoped that such charges against Shaw as a non-democrat, a heretic of Fabianism and a totalitarian social thinker may subsequently be examined.

The fourth chapter deals with Shaw's method of teaching and propagation of socialism which consisted of a group of recurring traits peculiar to the writer. These formed the style of his polemical writings. Since the essay on rent in the Fabian Essays was Shaw's

first most important published article on socialism and contains most of his major interest patterns on the subject, and as it is still available, an analysis of it is presented in order to examine, later on in the chapter, how this essay is a summary of traits of expression out of which the later polemical works arise.

In the concluding fifth chapter, Fabian Socialism is found to be the product of the age and the people. Fabianism differs from communism in its predominant interest in home reform through cautious parliamentary process. Shaw is a true Fabian Socialist because he is consistent in stressing the importance of gradual and practical reform. Shaw is primarily a propagandist with an aim to promote the practice of gradual reform proposed by the Society. Shaw makes his case for Fabian Socialism with a lucid style and in everyday language. His polemic works will be lasting for they are a heroic record to the efforts of the discontented intellectuals of the 1880's to improve social conditions.