"THE FIRM OF WEBB"

Mrs. SIDNEY WEBB
and
The Right Hon. LORD PASSFIELD
of
Passfield Corner

"We are both of us second-rate minds; but we are curiously combined. I am the investigator and he the executant; between us we have a wide and varied experience of men and affairs. We have also an unearned salary. These are unique circumstances. A considerable work should be the result if we use our combined talents with a deliberate and persistent purpose."—MRS. SIDNEY WEBB in her diary, under date of 7th July, 1891. (My Apprenticeship, by Beatrice Webb, p. 412.)

"Mr. Sidney Webb, who, with his wife, is passing through Constantinople, has had a meeting with Trotsky, the exiled Soviet leader.—Reuter."

—The Times, 2nd May, 1929, p. 15, col. 7.
"Everyone can visualise the powerful head, the singularly handsome features, the athletic figure of Trotsky... The man, indeed, is a natural aristocrat."—Mr. H. N. Brailsford in his Preface to English translation of "The Defence of Terrorism" (Allen & Unwin, 1921), by Bronstein, alias Trotsky, pp. ii-iii.

"Even if, in one country or another, the dictatorship of the proletariat grew up within the external framework of democracy, this would by no means avert the civil war. The question as to who is to rule the country, i.e., of the life or death of the bourgeoisie, will be decided on either side, not by references to the paragraphs of the constitution, but by the employment of all forms of violence... A revolutionary class which has conquered power with arms in its hands is bound to, and will suppress, rifle in hand, all attempts to tear the power out of its hands... The Red Terror is a weapon utilised against a class, doomed to destruction, which does not wish to perish."—Bronstein, alias Trotsky, "The Defence of Terrorism," pp. 52, 55, 60.

"We must get the Communists into the Labour Party... Our task is to convert our fellow-workers and also to educate the Army, Navy and Air Force, so that when a Labour Government is in power and the Tories bring out their White Guards to defy the constitution, the men in the Services will understand where their duty lies."—Mr. (now the Right Hon.) George Lansbury, M.P., in a Message sent from Moscow and published in the "Sunday Worker" of 5th September, 1926.

"In a period of universal suffrage it ought to be possible to capture the seat of power at the polls and throw upon the capitalist the onus of revolt against a Socialist democracy."—Mr. (now Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics) H. J. Laski in his "Karl Marx" (1922), at p. 41.
"THE FIRM OF WEBB."

1. As Lord Passfield in his Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa has declared that the interests of the immigrant races in British East Africa must henceforth be subordinated to those of African natives, it has become necessary, on behalf of the immigrant races, to investigate his antecedents and origin. This has involved an inquiry into the antecedents and ancestry of his wife who—a consistent Socialist—has refused to call herself "Lady Passfield." Since her marriage to Lord Passfield on July 23, 1892, and even earlier, she has been in partnership with him, but whether she or he be paramount is uncertain. According to her, Lord Passfield is the "predominant partner of the firm of Webb."³ On the other hand, Mr. E. R. Pease, the Secretary of the Fabian Society, in his History of the Fabian Society (2nd edition), "revised" by Lord Passfield himself⁴, tells us (p. 220) that, from April, 1912, onwards, Mrs. Webb has been "on the whole the dominant personality in the Fabian Society"—that body which, since 1884, appears to have acted as the Great General Staff of the army of Socialists in the British Empire. Like her husband, Mrs. Webb has been a most active writer, speaker, researcher and organiser. She appears to have been genuinely horrified at the vile conditions under which

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¹ My Apprenticeship (1926), by Beatrice Webb, p. 402.
² "Two of my colleagues, Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw, have been good enough to revise this volume... The MS. or proofs have been read by Mrs. Sidney Webb (p. 5)." There have been two editions—the first appeared in 1916, the year before the "Russian" Revolution, the second in 1925—of this most important and revealing book. From it and, to some extent, from the New Machiavellic of Mr. H. G. Wells, who for a time was a Fabian, a good idea of the activities of the "firm of Webb" can be obtained. With regard to the New Machiavellic, Mr. Wells wrote in the Sunday Express of 11/12/27: "I put in some people [the Baileys] in the place of the Webbs, rather like them, but not exactly them... They are not the Webbs, but only Webby people." When, in 1911, his novel was published, the Baileys were at once identified by the public with the Webbs. Here is a passage from Mr. Well's roman à clef:

"The Baileys loved a world as flat and metallic as Sidney Cooper's cows. If they had the universe in hand, I know they would take down all the trees and put up stamped tin green shades and sunlight accumulators. Altiora thought trees hopelessly irregular and sea cliffs a great mistake... I can still recall little Bailey, glib and winking, explaining that Democracy was really just a dodge for getting assent to the ordinances of the expert official by means of the polling booth."

If they read the above passage, the Webbs must have realised that they and the Fabian Society had, in Mr. Wells, been entertaining a fallen angel unawares. They might with some justice have retorted that Mr. Wells himself, also, loved a world "metallic and flat."
a considerable section of our population were living.

To investigate those conditions, concealing her identity, she worked as a tailoress in the East End of London. Up to her meeting with Mr. Webb she resembled the heroine in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, rather than Madame Roland.


Mrs. Sidney Webb before her marriage was a Miss Beatrice Potter. She is a granddaughter of a certain Richard Potter, who was a Unitarian, a leading member of the Manchester School of Liberals, and one of the founders of the *Manchester Guardian*. Known as “Radical Dick,” he was elected M.P. for Wigan in 1832, 1835, and 1837. A nephew (Thomas Bayley Potter) of his helped to establish, and was Secretary and Chairman of the Cobden Club.3

Mrs. Webb’s father, the son of “Radical Dick,” was a railway magnate who died on 1 January, 1892, leaving her a considerable fortune.

3. Lord Passfield’s Origin.

On 14 February, 1890, Miss Beatrice Potter, now Mrs. Sidney Webb, wrote in her diary:—

“Sidney Webb, the Socialist, dined here (Devonshire House Hotel). . . . A remarkable little man with a huge head and a tiny body. . . . A Jewish nose, prominent eyes and mouth, black hair, somewhat unkempt, spectacles and a most bourgeois black coat, shiny with wear . . . . He is utterly disinterested.”

—(*My Apprenticeship*, pp. 408-9.)

Lord Passfield’s birth certificate reveals that his Christian names are “Sidney James,” that he was born on 13 July, 1859, and that his father was one Charles

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3 The information as to Mrs. Webb’s paternal grandfather, Richard Potter, and his nephew is taken from the life of Thomas Bayley Potter in the Supplement to the *Dictionary of National Biography*. 
Webb, a hairdresser living at 44, Cranbourn Street, Soho. No. 44 is on the south side of Cranbourn Street, which is the north-eastern exit from Leicester Square. In 1859 there resided in Cranbourn Street—a street having fewer than 50 houses in it—persons with the un-English, un-Welsh, un-Scotch and un-Irish surnames of Balague, Klyberg, Lesocchi, Paillard, Perocchy, Kuper, Deroy, Genese, Distin, Sarmorini, Kammerer, Felix, Delegarde and Gouriet. If Lord Passfield’s childhood and boyhood were passed in the district of Soho, his bias towards Socialism and Internationalism is easily explainable.

"Soho was the great centre for both French Republicans and Italian Mazzini. Indeed, the caricaturists inevitably associated the foreigner with Leicester Square. . . . The last great rush of political refugees occurred after the suppression of the Paris Commune at the end of May, 1871. . . . The Communists, on arriving in London, sought for lodgings in the . . . dingy streets situated between Soho Square and Leicester Square."

It may be added that Karl Marx, brother-in-law of the Prussian Minister of State, von Westphalen, and tool of the Prussian capitalist, Friedrich Engels, lived for a time in lodgings at a house in Dean Street, Soho.

4. Lord Passfield’s Education.

Under ‘Education,’ the bijou biography—presumably contributed by Lord Passfield himself—in Who’s Who, gives:

"Private Schools, London; Switzerland; Mecklenburg-Schwerin; Birkbeck Institute; City of London College."

Consequently (like his intimate friend, the late Lord Haldane), Lord Passfield, when his character was being formed, came under German influence. As he was born in 1859, he seems to have been in the

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4 See the Post Office London Directory for 1859.
5 London in the Nineteenth Century, by Sir Walter Besant, pp. 399-400. The words quoted were written by the late Adolphe Smith, official interpreter at the Congresses of the 1st and 2nd Internationales.
Vaterland during, or soon after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1. Doubtless, while he was being educated in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the terrifying efficiency of the Prussian army and bureaucracy was brought to his notice.

5. Lord Passfield’s Business Experience.

After finishing his education, Lord Passfield (see Who’s Who) was from 1875-8 clerk in a Colonial broker’s office in London.

It must not, however, be supposed that when, owing to his ambition to become a bureaucrat or to some other cause, he left the Colonial broker’s office, Lord Passfield terminated his business career.

"Nowadays [in 1878, said Bismarck, who, while surreptitiously favouring the growth of Socialism in foreign countries, seems to have been alarmed at the strides it was making in Germany], Socialistic agitation is a trade like any other; men become agitators and popular orators as they formerly became smiths or carpenters; they take to the new business and find themselves a good deal better off in it than they did in the old one." 6

As is notorious, Lord Passfield has been, if not a popular orator, a first-rate agitator. And he has, also, been a most intelligent salesman of a certain brand of mental pabulum. Says his friend, Mr. W. A. S. Hewins:

"I remember Sidney Webb once told me that he had sold eighteen thousand copies of a new edition of their [his and his wife’s] History of Trade Unionism, before the day of publication." 7

6 Busch’s Our Chancellor (Macmillan), Vol. II, pp. 214-15. Another of Bismarck’s speeches delivered in 1878 is well worth reading at the present day. It contains a remarkable prophecy of what is now happening in Russia. “If everybody,” he said, “is to be supplied with the needful by an administration, people will come to lead the lives of prisoners, shut up in gaols, none of whom follow occupations of their own choice, but work under the compulsion of the warders... There will be no appeal against them; they (the warders) will be the most merciless tyrants and all the others will be their slaves.” Ibid., II, p. 195.

Assuming that eighteen thousand copies of a new edition of the work mentioned were in fact sold before the day of publication, it was a truly astonishing performance!

6. **Lord Passfield as Bureaucrat (1878-91).**

*Who's Who* informs us that Lord Passfield was:

1878-9. Clerk in War Office (Lower Division), by open competition.

1879-81. Surveyor of Taxes (Class I.), by open competition.

1881-91. Clerk in Colonial Office (Class I.), by open competition.

7. **Lord Passfield as Agitator during the same period (1878-91); and on Socialism in Great Britain between 1880 and 1895.**

1879.

"In the winter of 1879 Lecky [not the historian but a friend of Mr. Bernard Shaw] joined a debating club, called the Zeletical Society, numbering among its members Mr. Sidney Webb, Mr. Emil Gareke and Mr. J. G. Godard... [In the Zeletical Society] there was complete freedom of discussion, political, religious, and sexual." (*George Bernard Shaw*, by Archibald Henderson, M.A., Ph.D., pp. 91-2.)

1880.

"At this time there was no effective Socialism whatever in Great Britain... It would have been quite useless... even to attempt to create at once an avowed Socialist Party... In 1880 it is scarcely too much to say that Marx was practically unknown to the English public, except as a dangerous and even desperate advocate of revolution whose organisation of the International had been one of the causes of the horrible Commune of Paris, which all decent respectable people shuddered at and thought of with horror." (*Hyndman’s The Record of an Adventurous Life*, pp. 223, 225, 272.)
November 5. Karl Marx wrote to his American accomplice, F. A. Sorge:—

"Quand on veut agir pour Messieurs les Francais, il faut le faire anonymement, pour ne pas choquer le sentiment 'national.' As it is, the anarchists denounce our co-operators already as Prussian agents, under the dictatorship of the 'notorious' Prussian agent—Karl Marx." (Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen von ... Karl Marx ... an F. A. Sorge ... , pp. 171-2.)

"At the close of 1880 and the beginning of 1881," Hyndman—introduced by a certain Karl Hirsch to Marx—had "frequent conversations" with Marx, who was "entirely sympathetic with my [Hyndman's] idea of reviving the Chartist organisation." (Op. cit., p. 273.)

1881. The Democratic Federation—afterwards the Social Democratic Federation—was founded by Hyndman.

1883. Thomas Davidson, born in Scotland, and then domiciled in the U.S.A., on one of his "mysterious missions" (Havelock Ellis) started a Society in London, the Fellowship of the New Life.

1884, January 4.


September. Mr. George Bernard Shaw was elected a member of the Fabian Society and read a Manifesto (Fabian Tract No. 2) which ended:

"The established Government has no more right to call itself the State than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather ... We had rather face a Civil War than such another century of suffering as the present one has been." 9

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8 Memorials of Thomas Davidson, by William Knight, p. 46.
December 30. The Socialist League was founded by seceders from The Social Democratic Federation, among them Eleanor, daughter of Karl Marx.

1885, March 20:—

"Sidney Webb read a paper . . . and on the 1st May he was elected a member (of the Fabian Society) along with his Colonial Office colleague, Sydney Olivier." (Pease's History of the Fabian Society, p. 46).

"When Webb, at Shaw's persuasion, joined the Fabians, Olivier went with him." (Henderson's George Bernard Shaw, p. 99).

Mrs. Annie Besant about the same time joined the Fabian Society.10

"Under the influence of Sidney Webb, the Fabian Society began to study facts."—(Kirkup's History of Socialism, Fifth Edition, p. 378.)

1887, January(?). "Facts for Socialists" (Fabian Tract, No. 5—by far the most popular of Fabian Tracts-) was published.

"'Facts for Socialists' was the work of Sidney Webb."—(Pease's History of the Fabian Society, revised by Sidney Webb, p. 70.)

This Tract No. 5 has been very severely criticised by the historian, Professor F. J. C. Hearnshaw and others.

"Of all the perpetual memorials of Fabian duplicity, the notorious Tract No. 5 stands scandalously pre-eminent. . . . It is an almost perfect model of the way in which authentic figures, drawn from reputable and authoritative sources, can be manipulated . . . to convey to ignorant and uncritical minds pernicious and inflammatory falsehoods."11

1888, August 8. The following letter appeared in the Star:

"To the Editor of the Star.

"Sir,—The enclosed has just been put into my hands as having been picked up between Parliament Street

10 Ibid., p. 47.
11 Professor F. J. C. Hearnshaw, A Survey of Socialism, p. 302.
and the House of Commons. . . . Can it be that this is a draft for submission to the National Liberal Federation Executive? There is no signature. . . . The document may be delivered by you to any politician laying claim to it."

"Yours, etc.,

"S.W."

The document enclosed with this letter, which document was also published by the Star, is—apart from its heading "Birmingham Conference, November, 1888,"—identical with Section 10 of the pamphlet, "Wanted, a Programme: An Appeal to the Liberal Party, by Sidney Webb (Holborn, Westminster and London University Liberal and Radical Associations)," the title page of and some extracts—including Section 10, "The Programme for London"—from which are given in the Appendix.12

Immediately afterwards, also in August of 1888, Wanted, a Programme, etc., was "printed for private circulation among leading London Liberals."

"Sidney Webb, in 1888, printed privately a paper entitled 'Wanted, a Programme: An Appeal to the Liberal Party,' and sent it out widely amongst the Liberal leaders. . . . Everything was done which skilful agitators knew to make a popular demand for a social reform programme. . . . The result—how largely attributable to our efforts can hardly now be estimated—was the Newcastle Program, reluctantly blessed by Mr. Gladstone and adopted by the National Liberal Federation in 1891."—(Pease's History of the Fabian Society, revised by Sidney Webb, pp. 111-12.)

Concerning Wanted, a Programme, etc., Lord Sydenham, first Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence and Ex-Governor of Victoria and Bombay, has written that

"This remarkable effusion closely and curiously resembles the Report on Reconstruction prepared for the Labour Conference at Nottingham [January, 1918]," and that it contains a "purely revolutionary scheme."13

12 There is a copy of Wanted, a Programme, etc., in the British Museum Library. (Press Mark 8282, ff 11 (3.).)

Lord Sydenham has not in the least exaggerated. *Wanted, a Programme, etc.*, outlines most of the principal legislative and administrative measures of a revolutionary character adopted since 1888 in our islands. Basing his arguments on the alleged fact, that "four out of every five of the adult male population" in the British Isles were "engaged in manual labour for weekly wages," and on another fact, which he did not mention, that the wage-earners were, as a class, abysmally ignorant of—to quote the words of a Liberal, the late Lord Robson—"the vast and complicated mechanism of modern industry on which our people depend for bread and life," Lord Passfield or, as he then was, Mr. Sidney James Webb, posing as a Liberal, urged "leading London Liberals" to turn their backs on the, more or less, educated Middle and Upper Classes and to concentrate all their efforts on angling for the votes of manual workers. The "gradual extinction of the recipients of rent and interest," and "the gradual public organisation of labour for all public purposes and the elimination of the private capitalist and middle-man" were the main objectives indicated to "leading London Liberals" in this Neo-Machiavellian plan. Mr. Webb, the Socialist camouflaged as a Liberal, was careful, however, not to remind them that Great Britain, a country in 1888 with a very heavy National Debt, imported vast quantities of food-stuffs, drink, tobacco and raw materials (*e.g.*, cotton), and had to meet a huge adverse trade balance with invisible exports, liable to disappear if revolutionary schemes were put into operation. That the 37,000,000 or so men, women and children living in 1888 in the British Isles—a population likely, in the then immediate future to grow not decrease—were not isolated in space and time, and that their very existence was threatened by Great Powers with
formidable armies and navies, and with selfish economic aims, was also concealed from his readers by the ex-War-Office clerk, educated in Switzerland and Mecklenburg-Schwerin and holding in 1888 a responsible position in our Colonial Office!

The last point needs some stressing. Mr. Webb must have been well aware that the British Empire in 1888 had not only internal foes (the Home Rule Irish and the Boers) but also—in Russia, France, the U.S.A., and the German Empire—jealous rivals with any one or a combination of whom war was possible.

Russia still smarted from the defeats inflicted on her by the British and their allies in the Crimean War. She had been on the verge of hostilities with us in 1878, and in 1885, over the Penjdeh incident. France had been irritated by our attitude towards her in 1870-1 and angered by our occupation of Egypt. The Monroe doctrine alone kept us on very delicate terms with the U.S.A.; we had incurred the bitter enmity of the American-Irish, and the non-Irish elements in the U.S.A. were taught that we had been entirely in the wrong during both the American War of Independence and the Anglo-American War of 1812-14; and the vast majority of Americans greatly resented the sympathy shown by too many of our statesmen and people for the South and remembered with feelings of hatred the assistance given to the Confederates by British individuals in the Civil War of 1861-5. Lastly, American trans-oceanic trade was rapidly expanding and the exploits of the Alabama showed how easily Great Britain, then Mistress of the Seas, could interfere with it.

Thus, for the above and other reasons, Russia, France, and the U.S.A. were, in 1888, hostilley disposed towards us and, as it happened, with all three—Russia over the Dogger Bank incident (1904), France over Siam (1893) and over Fashoda (1898), the U.S.A. over Venezuela (1895)—we nearly came to blows.
With the German Empire we were destined to fight a quarter of a century later. That Power, openly in alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy, and secretly linked with Russia, was in 1888 casting covetous eyes on our oversea possessions, and it had already acquired harbours, whence its cruisers could threaten our communications with the Cape, India, and Australasia. Since 1864—the year when Engels and Marx got control of the First International and Prussia violently assaulted Denmark—the Hohenzollerns, assisted by the astute and unscrupulous Bismarck, and by Moltke and Roon, had evicted the Hapsburgs from Germany and destroyed the unstable empire of our erstwhile ally, Napoleon III. A German Empire had been created, and in 1884—the year of the foundation of the Fabian Society—the first overt steps were taken against ourselves, Germany annexing Togoland and the Cameroons, and laying the foundations of her colonies in South-West and East Africa. At the same time, to the alarm of Australia, she seized part of New Guinea and several small islands (the Bismarck archipelago) in the Pacific. That she was engaged in underhand communications with the Boers, greatly elated by their victories of Laing’s Nek and Majuba, was an open secret, and in 1885 relations between her and Great Britain were already very strained. Bismarck despised and detested us, and the bulk of the German people, as was strikingly exhibited by the German outcry—in the spring and summer of 1888—against Sir Morell Mackenzie and the Empress Frederick, agreed with Bismarck. Remembering Sadowa and Sedan, the Prussians were dreaming of the day when a Hohenzollern Alaric would sack London. “What a city to sack!” the Prussian hero, Blücher, our guest, was reported to have said.

Such was the position when, two months before Mr. Webb published Wanted, a Programme, etc., the Anglophil Emperor Frederick died and William II., an enthusiastic admirer of the statecraft of Frederick
the Great, ascended the throne of the most efficient military empire the world had ever seen. That, sooner or later, we might be engaged in a struggle for existence with Germany was a contingency which a clerk in the counsels of the Colonial Office—a clerk, who had been educated in Germany—might have been expected to contemplate. So far, however, from taking it into account, Mr. Webb, as we have seen, secretly endeavoured at this time to persuade the Liberal Party to adopt a "purely revolutionary scheme," calculated, i.a., to place the Government of the British Isles in the hands, not of far-sighted statesmen, but of demagogues living from hand to mouth. Had his plan been carried out in its entirety before 1914, Germany would have gained the hegemony of Europe and we should have been at her mercy.

Was Mr. Webb the author of that "purely revolutionary scheme"? If the reader turns to Section 9 of Wanted, a Programme, etc., given on page 31, he will perceive that Mr. Webb did not claim that the "programme" advocated by him was drawn up by himself.

"The National Liberal Federation [he said] has apparently no desire to get into touch with this [the Socialistic] kind of popular feeling, and takes no steps to do so. If it did it would find the programme framing itself somewhat as in the following draft, reprinted from "The Star" (August 8th, 1888)."

Let us turn back to "S.W.'s" letter in The Star of 8th August, 1888. In it "S.W." asserted that—

"the enclosed [i.e., the programme in Section 10 of the pamphlet] has just been put into my hands as having been picked up between Parliament Street and the House of Commons."

Can it be that "S.W." was duped and that the programme in Section 10 of the pamphlet was "put into the hands" of "S.W." by an agent of the Hohenzollerns?
Whatever are the real facts, this episode in Lord Passfield's career is very mysterious. Many Liberal leaders must have read his pamphlet, and it is difficult to believe that his "purely revolutionary scheme" did not come to the knowledge of his official superiors.

**September.**

"Webb had at that time [21st September, 1888] started for a three months' visit to the United States, in which I [Mr. E. R. Pease] accompanied him."—(Pease's *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 76.)

It would be interesting to ascertain what the Secretary of the Fabian Society and Mr. Webb did in the U.S.A. Unfortunately, Mr. Pease, for reasons best known to himself, does not tell us.

**1891, October.** The National Liberal Federation launched its programme at Newcastle.

"The exact facts of the launching of the Newcastle Program are these. Webb gave me [Mr. Bernard Shaw] the program in his own handwriting as a string of resolutions. I... a permeative Fabian on the executive of the South St. Pancras Liberal and Radical Association... took them down to a meeting in Percy Hall, Percy Street, Tottenham Court Road, where the late Mr. Beale, then Liberal candidate... was to address as many of the ten as might turn up under the impression that he was addressing a public meeting. There were certainly not 20 present, perhaps not 10. I asked him to move the resolutions. He said they looked complicated, and that if I would move them he would second them. I moved them, turning over Webb's pages by batches and not reading most of them. Mr. Beale seconded. Passed unanimously. That night they went down to *The Star* with a report of an admirable speech which Mr. Beale was supposed to have delivered. Next day he found the National Liberal Club in an uproar at his revolutionary break-away. But he played up... said we lived in progressive times and must move with them, and carried it off. Then he took the report of his speech to the U.S. and delivered several addresses founded on it with great success."14

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14 Footnote by Mr. George Bernard Shaw on p. 112 of Pease's *History of the Fabian Society*, italics not in original. The cynical and un-English attitude of the Fabians may be gathered from this and the passage next to be quoted.
1892. February 6. Mr. George Bernard Shaw, at Essex Hall, read a paper, published as Fabian Tract, No. 41. Below are some extracts from it:—

"[In 1888] the Star newspaper was started [on 17th January, 1888]. We [the Fabians] collared the Star by a stage-army stratagem, and before the year was out had the assistant-editor, Mr. H. W. Massingham, writing as extreme articles as Hyndman had ever written in Justice. . . . We urged our members to join the Liberal and Radical Associations of their districts, or, if they preferred it, the Conservative Associations. We told them to become members of the nearest Radical Club and Co-operative Store, and to get delegated to the Metropolitan Radical Federation and the Liberal and Radical Union if possible. . . . We permeated the party organizations and pulled all the wires we could lay our hands on with our utmost adroitness and energy, and we succeeded so far that in 1888 we gained the solid advantage of a Progressive majority, full of ideas that would never have come into their heads had not the Fabian put them there, on the first London County Council. The generalship of this movement was undertaken chiefly by Sidney Webb, who played such bewildering conjuring tricks with the Liberal thimbles and the Fabian peas, that to this day both the Liberals and the sectarian Socialists stand aghast at him. . . . It is only necessary to compare the Nottingham program of the National Liberal Federation for 1887 with the Newcastle program for 1891 . . . to appreciate the extent to which the policy of permeating the party organizations with Socialism had succeeded."—(Fabian Tract No. 41, pp. 18 and 19. Italics not in original.)

July. Keir Hardie was elected M.P. for South-West Ham.

"One member of the Fabian Society has been elected to Parliament, viz., J. Keir Hardie." (Fabian News, "For Members Only," August, 1892.)

1893. The Fabian Society, of which Mr. Keir Hardie and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald were members, helped to bring into existence the Independent Labour Party.

"The great work of the I.L.P. was the conversion of the leaders of Trade Unionism." 15

April 1. In *Justice*, Hyndman said:—

"Already we understand that a smart intriguer ... more than hints that he holds the whole Independent Labour Party, so far as political candidates go, in dependence on the funds which he provides; while at his little Paris Commune meeting in the supper-room of the Communistische Arbeiter-Bildung’s Verein in Tottenham Street the other night, Friedrich Engels proclaimed that this same party, with his special favourite at its head, would sweep on to victory for the petty Marxist clique."

According to the well-informed Hyndman, the Marxists in Great Britain were, in 1893, a "petty clique."

1895, August. In *Fabian News* the results of all the Socialist candidatures at the General Election of that year were tabulated and the Party to which each candidate belonged was given. Of the 38 Socialist candidates, 19 were members of the Fabian Society! Here is part of the table published in *Fabian News*.

"CANDIDATES WHO ARE FABIANS.

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<td>G. N. Barnes</td>
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<td>Keir Hardie</td>
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<td>J. R. MacDonald</td>
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<td>Tom Mann</td>
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<td>Ben Tillett</td>
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OTHER SOCIALIST CANDIDATES.

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<th>NAME</th>
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<td>John Burns</td>
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<td>H. M. Hyndman</td>
<td>S.D.F.</td>
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<td>Geo. Lansbury</td>
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Of all the Socialist candidates only Mr. John Burns was elected. What did Keir Hardie after his defeat?

"He [J. Keir Hardie] ... visited us [Joseph and Mary Fels] in our home at Philadelphia when, on the loss of his seat in West Ham in 1895, he came to America.
at the invitation of the American Labour Unions."
(Joseph Fels, His Life-Work. By Mary Fels, pp. 58-9. This book was published in 1920.)

The American millionaire, Joseph Fels, was from 1904 to 1914—the year of his death—one of the financial backers of Mr. George Lansbury, and in 1907 advanced money (according to the late Mr. Israel Zangwill, £17,000) to Lenin and Trotsky. (See Mr. George Lansbury's My Life, pp. 99-109 and 246-7, and An Admirer of Lenin, pp. 10-12.)

As already mentioned, the General Election of 1895 resulted in only one Socialist being returned to Parliament, which is conclusive evidence that up till then the Socialists and Communists in our midst had failed to make any considerable impression on the electors in the British Isles. Yet, between 1896—the year of Kaiser Wilhelm II's notorious cable to Kruger—and the opening of the Great War, the "petty Marxist clique" captured the funds of the Trade Unions, created a "Labour" Party in Parliament, converted large numbers of Liberals and Church of England and Nonconformist clergies into Socialists or semi-Socialists, established nuclei in the offices of most of our newspapers and brought over to their way of "thinking" a host of publicists, of Civil and Municipal servants, of Dons at Universities, and teachers in Public, Secondary and Elementary Schools. Very large sums of money must have been spent here on Socialist propaganda between 1896 and 1914.

Who provided that money? Had any Great Power an interest in promoting class war and pacifism in the British Empire? The answer which leaps to the eye is that Germany had such an interest, and it is, therefore, in the highest degree probable that part of the money was provided by Germany.

Money may, however, have come to our Marxists from other sources, and a fact like the financing of Mr. George Lansbury by Mr. Joseph Fels, financier
of Lenin and Trotsky, indicates that there was a body of rich men in the underworld of Politics, working for the destruction of the British Empire and subsidising our Marxists.


A year or so before her marriage to Lord Passfield in 1892, Miss Beatrice Potter, who, by the way, had met Karl Marx’s daughter, the agitator Eleanor Marx, in 1883, made this entry, under date of 7th July, 1891, in her diary:

"We [Mr. Webb and herself] are both of us second-rate minds; but we are curiously combined. I am the investigator and he the executant; between us we have a wide and varied experience of men and affairs. We have also an unearned salary. These are unique circumstances. A considerable work should be the result if we use our combined talents with a deliberate and persistent purpose."—(My Apprenticeship, p. 412.)

A few facts and quotations will enable the reader to form a fairly accurate idea of the kind of work done by the "Firm of Webb."

1894-5. The Firm, with the aid of the late Lord Haldane, whose "spiritual home" was in Germany, founded the London School of Economics.

The Fabian, Mr. H. J. Laski, who dedicated his A Grammar of Politics to "the London School of Economics and to Sidney and Beatrice Webb its founders," is Professor of Political Science at this institution. In his Karl Marx he has written of that venomous enemy of the British:

"When the roll of those to whom the emancipation of the people is due comes to be called, few will have a more honourable and none a more eminent place," (p. 46);

Additional information about Webbian activities will be found in Potted Biographies: A Dictionary of Anti-National Biography (Boswell, price 6d.).
While in his *Communism* he has said:—

"Those who represent the Bolshevists as a set of unprincipled adventurers in German pay do sorry service to the understanding of the greatest event in history since the Reformation... Most of their leaders, and notably Lenin and Trotsky... had dedicated their lives to the service of their cause... It is illegitimate to question either their honesty or their idealism."

(p. 45.)

1899.

"In May, 1899... a Members’ meeting [of the Fabian Society] was held to discuss ‘The Education Muddle and the Way Out’ in the form of sixteen resolutions, six on ‘General Principles’ and the remainder on ‘Immediate Practicable Proposals.’ These were introduced by Webb, and the ‘General Principles,’ advocating the transfer of education to the local government authority and the abolition of School Boards, were adopted... At the adjourned meeting in November, 1899... a draft tract was submitted... In December the tract as amended was submitted... and with minor amendments the scheme was adopted. *It is unnecessary to describe the Fabian plan, because it is substantially the system of administration established by the Act of 1902, under which present-day education is organised...* The scheme proposed by Mr. [A. J.] Balfour followed almost precisely the lines laid down in our tract, which was published in January, 1901... Our support of the Conservative Government in their education policy caused much surprise." 17

Our "present-day education" is exceedingly expensive and the results from it are, generally speaking, very poor. If Mr. Pease’s statements are correct, we have no reason to be grateful to the Fabians and the Firm of Webb!

1905-9. Mrs. Webb, was a member of the Royal Commission on Poor Law and Unemployment; the Minority Report was her and her husband’s production; and that Report—signed by Mr. George Lansbury—has accelerated the Poplarisation of our country.

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1913. The Webbs were among the founders of the *New Statesman*, organ of highbrow subversives.


April 29. At a time when the British Empire was fighting for its existence, a message from the Webbs was published in the *Labour Leader*, official organ of the I.L.P., along with messages from Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, the late Mr. E. D. Morel and Mr. George Lansbury. The Webbs' message contained the following:—

"Just as law involves the policeman, so the maintenance of Public Right in the World involves a World Authority. . . . The best (sic) hope that we can have in this time is that, out of a war-weary world, may emerge—as the first and most essential of the Terms of Peace—an *Supernational Authority . . . with a Supernational Legislature, and a Supernational High Court.*"

1917, July. Mrs. Sidney Webb, the late Lord Haldane, the late Mr. Edwin Montagu, Mr. J. H. Thomas, Sir Robert L. Morant, Sir George H. Murray and Colonel Sir Alan Sykes were appointed the members of a Sub-Committee of the Reconstruction Committee. This sub-committee, called the "Machinery of Government Committee," on 14th December, 1918, addressed a Report (Parliamentary Papers, 1918, Cd. 9230) to the Right Hon. Christopher Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction.

It will be observed that no prominent Conservatives were, and that Mrs. Webb was, on the Sub-Committee. That there were in 1917 (as now) ample reasons for examining our "Machinery of Government," goes without saying. A doctor of medicine had been Minister of Munitions and was then Minister of

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18 Our shell shortage was, a fortnight or so later, revealed by Colonel Repington in the *Times*.
Reconstruction, while the criticaster of the imperialist historian Froude, Dr. H. A. L. Fisher, was President of the Board of Education! 19

Why Mr. Lloyd George entrusted the duty of examining our "Machinery of Government" to such persons as Mrs. Webb, the Pro-German egomaniac Lord Haldane, the neurotic disorganiser Mr. Montagu, and that very erratic Socialist, Mr. J. H. Thomas, is one of the minor mysteries of our times.

1918, June. "Labour and the New Social Order," written by Mr. Webb, was adopted by the "Labour" Party Conference at London as an "exposition of its principles and programme." 20

June 29. Before the Great War was decided, Mr. Webb, in a long letter to that Ultra-"Radical" (i.e., Socialist) American organ, the New Republic, implored Americans to finance our "Labour" Party. He said:—

"In all Europe the policy of the United States in this war has found its most cordial, most whole-hearted and least equivocating support not in the governments, but, at the instigation and largely through the British Labour Party, in the Labour Movements of the Allied Nations."

1919. Mr. Webb and two other Fabians, Mr. R. H. Tawney and Sir Leo Chiozza Money, were members of the Sankey Commission on the Coal Industry. The three Fabians were:—

"chiefly responsible for the Majority Report advocating the nationalisation of the mines. . . . The services of Sidney Webb to the miners in this connection resulted in his being placed at the head of the poll for the Labour Party Executive of 1919." (Pease's History of the Fabian Society, 2nd Edition, p. 265.)

19 On this pandit's grotesque errors when criticising Froude, see Professor Waldo H. Dunn's Froude and Carlyle (Longmans), pp. 107-12.
20 Pease's History of the Fabian Society, p. 264.
A very large part of our industrial troubles can be traced back to the Sankey Commission and its Majority Report.

1922. Mr. Webb was elected M.P. for a Durham mining constituency.

1923, May. Mr. Webb was put on the Administrative Committee of the Sozialistische Arbeiter Internationale (Labour and Socialist International formed in Hamburg). The British "Labour" Party is affiliated to this International, "the decisions of which in all international questions are binding on its affiliated bodies." In the Labour Year Book of 1924, issued by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the National Executive of the Labour Party, we read at p. 379 that:

"in conflicts between nations the International shall be recognised as the highest authority."

1924. Mr. Webb was President of the Board of Trade in Mr. Ramsay MacDonald’s first Cabinet.

"Now in the Spring of 1924 it may be said that we are beginning to reap the harvest. . . . Mr. Ramsay MacDonald [ex-Fabian] is Prime Minister, and in a Cabinet of twenty, five are Fabians." (Pease’s History of the Fabian Society, 2nd Edition, p. 258.)

May 29.

"I met Mrs. Sidney Webb several days ago and asked her to tell me what benefit it was to anyone to drop the McKenna Duties. She said that they were ‘inconsistent with their ideal’ and that they meant to drop them." (The Apologia of an Imperialist, by W. A. S. Hewins, II., pp. 285-6.)

1929, May 2. The Times published a Reuter cable from Constantinople.

"Mr. Sidney Webb, who with his wife is passing through Constantinople, has had a meeting with Trotsky, the exiled Soviet leader."
June 8.

"The following received the Seals of Office, took the Oath, and kissed [His Majesty's] hands upon appointment... The Right Hon. Sidney Webb (as Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and the Colonies)." (The Times, 10th June, 1929.)

June 25.

"It is announced in last night's London Gazette that the King has conferred the dignity of a Baron of the United Kingdom upon the Right Hon. Sidney James Webb... by the name, style and title of Baron Passfield of Passfield Corner." (Ibid., 26th June, 1929.)

June 27.

"The first business [in the House of Lords] after prayers was the introduction of Mr. Sidney Webb on his elevation to the peerage as Baron Passfield... The sponsors of Lord Passfield were Lord Parmoor, Lord President of the Council, and Lord Arnold, Paymaster-General." (Ibid., 28th June, 1929.)

With the elevation of one of the partners to the House of Lords, whose "abolition or painless extinction" was advocated in Wanted, a Programme, etc., we may take leave of "The Firm of Webb." Its activities ought to be thoroughly investigated by a Royal Commission!
CONCLUSION.

The American, Mr. Ludwell Denny, in his very outspoken book, *America Conquers Britain* (Alfred A. Knopf, London and New York, price 12/6), says:—

"Conditions which once made England strong, now make her weak. Her physical isolation is gone; the Channel, once a barrier, is now an invitation to attack from beneath and above the waters by submarine and aircraft. Many nations, which paid tribute for her goods and gold, have come of age industrially; they no longer need her. At home her industrial decay and financial burdens create misery and unrest. Her dominions have ceased to be dominions. Her colonies are in revolt. She lacks her old conquering spirit. British policy to-day—whether commercial, naval, or political—is conditioned by one inexorable fact: She is an over-populated, dependent, exposed island. As a major World Power her days are numbered. Her genius is to have built the richest of empires out of such poverty of resources, to have achieved such strength from such weakness. Her fate is to meet, in the declining years of her age, a nation [the American] more blest by nature with riches and power than all her long-accumulated store—a giant, prodigal, daring, assertive, young. Britain versus America: A pinched and defenceless island against a continent guarded by two oceans. A dependent island unable to feed or clothe herself, against a nation more self-possessed in peace and war than any the world has known. Britain has too much population, America has a regulated balance. Britain has too little food, America has too much. Britain has industrial strife, America has industrial peace[!] . Britain has diminishing coal supplies, America has coal in abundance and the more important energies of the future, oil and hydro-electric power. Britain has virtually no[!] domestic raw materials, America has many. Britain has an obsolete[!] plant and technique, America leads all in industrial equipment and organisation. Britain is losing world markets, America is gaining them. Britain is declining in sea power, America is rising. Britain is on the defensive, America is on the offensive." (pp. 403-4.)

Such are the opinions of a well-informed, if somewhat imaginative, American on our position in 1930.
Will Mr. Ludwell Denny's prophecies that the British Empire will shortly be a thing of the past, and that as a "major World Power" Great Britain will disappear be fulfilled? The answer to those questions depends mainly on the verdict of the electors and electresses at the next General Election. If they return to power a Party directed by Neo-Machiavellian barbarophils, not even possessing first-rate minds, the British Empire, which in November, 1918 was the greatest political entity in the world, may, and very probably will be completely dissolved, and the vast majority of the 48,000,000 men, women and children in the British Isles will end their days in a state of abject misery.
APPENDIX.

Extracts from
WANTED, A PROGRAMME
and
A Few Words on Mr. Webb's
"Purely Revolutionary Scheme."
"WANTED, 
A PROGRAMME"

An Appeal to the Liberal Party.

By SIDNEY WEBB
(Holborn, Westminster and London University Liberal and Radical Associations.)

The following pages have been printed for private circulation among leading London Liberals, in the hope of causing some effort to be made to unite the mass of the Metropolitan wage-earners with the Liberal Party. At present they are neither of it nor with it, and London Liberalism is, in consequence, but a feeble growth.

It may be objected that it is unwise to draw attention to our own weakness. The writer does not agree with this view, and he will be only too pleased if, through his efforts, the fact is brought home, with disagreeable force, to the mind of any Liberal who had formerly been unconscious of it.

27, Keppel Street,
Russell Square,
London, W.C.

August, 1888.
WANTED, A PROGRAMME.
An Appeal to the Liberal Party.


What can be done to dispel the political apathy of London? How can a renewal of the crushing Liberal defeats of 1885 and 1886 be averted? These are questions which must constantly be rising in the minds of earnest workers for Liberalism in the great metropolitan centre.

6. The Attitude of the Middle-Class Politician.

No doubt it is difficult for the ordinary middle-class Liberal to realise this fact. He and his leaders have so often told the masses that the Liberal party is the party of Labour, that he, at any rate, has come to believe it to be true. When Mr. Gladstone with true political prescience, announced that the conflict was between the "classes" and the "masses," the middle-class Liberal hailed the declaration with joy, forgetting that he himself was one of the "classes," and of the particular class which usually comes most directly in conflict with the real interests of the wage-earners. Is the Liberal party really going to be the party of the masses? Then it can no more be the party of the middle-class than that of the aristocracy whom they hate.

It is high time that Liberals arrived at clear ideas on this point. Four out of every five of the adult male population are engaged in manual labour for weekly wages (Prof. Leone Levi, *Times*, 13th January, 1885.) The aristocracy, the professions, the manufacturers, the farmers, the shopkeepers and all others
put together, do not make up one-fifth of the population. . . . Do the Liberal leaders intend to try to win London by such Liberal votes as can still be picked up among the one-fifth of the population? If not, what are they doing to bring over the four-fifths to their side?

* * * * *

9. Wanted, a Programme.

What is the Liberal Programme to be? Will the Liberal party again commit the serious tactical error of alienating the masses, disgusting the Radicals and disgracing its own name and traditions, by a merely sham programme? Or will it set itself to work to find out the actual social wrongs to be set right, the real grievances, not of the middle-class, but of the bulk of the people, and the "dim inarticulate" desires which these feel and want realised? Such a course may be dangerous, for many still within our ranks profit by those very social wrongs, and live by the denial of those popular desires. The alternative is, however, not merely dangerous but suicidal, for the continued support of the capitalist as such necessarily involves the continued alienation of his "hands." It is perhaps irrelevant to enquire which, for the "Party of the Masses," is the honest course. The masses still, however, expect some honesty even in politicians. We profess to desire to remove the grievances of the workers. We ask for their votes to aid us in setting Ireland free so as to enable us then to work out their redemption. We believe and trust in the people. We rely on the popular voice. Would it not be well to pay some attention to what the masses of the people want, and to find out what their voice says? Seek for it in the spontaneous organisations of the wage-earners. Ask the London Working Men's Clubs what their members wish done in political matters. What says the Trades Union Congress? What is the programme of the Metropolitan Radical Federation?
But all these evidences of the popular will are likely again to be ignored. The National Liberal Federation has apparently no desire to get into touch with this kind of popular feeling and takes no steps to do so. If it did it would find the programme framing itself somewhat as in the following draft, reprinted from "The Star" (August 8th, 1888). Will the Liberal leaders pluck up courage enough to adopt it?

10. The Programme for London.

Revision of Taxation.

Object.

Complete shifting of burden from the workers, of whatever grade, to the recipients of rent and interest, with a view to the ultimate and gradual extinction of the latter class.

Means.

1. Abolition of all customs and excise duties, except those on spirits.

2. Increase of income tax, differentiating in favour of earned as against unearned incomes, and graduating cumulatively by system of successive levels of abatement.

3. Equalisation and increase of death duties and use of the proceeds as capital, not income.

4. Shifting of local rates and house duty from occupier to owner, any contract to the contrary notwithstanding.

5. Compulsory redemption of existing land tax and re-imposition on all ground rents and increased values.

6. Abolition of fees on licences for employment.

7. Abolition of police-court fees.
**Extension of Factory Acts.**

**Object.**

To raise, universally, the standard of comfort by obtaining the general recognition of a minimum wage and a maximum working day.

**Means.**

1. Extension of the general provisions of the Factory and Workshops Acts (or the Mines Regulation Acts, as the case may be) to all employers of labour.

2. Compulsory registration of all employers of more than three (?) workers.

3. Largely increased number of inspectors, and these to include women, and to be mainly chosen from the wage-earning class.

4. Immediate reduction of maximum hours to eight per day in all Government and Municipal employment, in all mines, and in all licensed monopolies such as railways, tramways, gas-works, water-works, docks, harbours, etc.; and in any trade in which a majority of the workers desire it.

5. The compulsory insertion of clauses in all contracts for Government or Municipal supplies, providing that:
   
   (a) there shall be no sub-contracting,

   (b) that no worker shall be employed more than eight hours per day, and

   (c) that no wages less than a prescribed minimum shall be paid.

**Educational Reform.**

**Object.**

To enable all, even the poorest, children to obtain not merely some, but the best education they are capable of.
Means.

1. The immediate abolition of all fees in public elementary schools, Board or voluntary, with a corresponding increase in the Government grant.

2. Creation of a Minister for Education, with control over the whole educational system, from the elementary school to the University, and over all educational endowments.


4. Continuation, in all cases, of elementary education at evening schools.

5. Registration and inspection of all private educational establishments.

Re-Organisation of Poor Law Administration.

Object.

To provide generously, and without stigma, for the aged, the sick, and those destitute through temporary want of employment, without relaxing the "tests" against the endowment of able-bodied idleness.

Means.

1. The separation of the relief of the aged and the sick from the workhouse system, by a universal system of aged pensions, and public infirmaries.

2. The industrial organisation and technical education of all able-bodied paupers.

3. The provision of temporary relief works for the unemployed.

4. The supersession of the Boards of Guardians by the local municipal authorities.
Extension of Municipal Activity.

Object.
The gradual public organisation of labour for all public purposes, and the elimination of the private capitalist and middle-man.

Means.
1. The provision of increased facilities for the acquisition of land, the destruction without compensation of all dwellings found unfit for habitation, and the provision of artisan dwellings by the municipality.

2. The facilitation of every extension of municipal administration in London and all other towns, of gas, water, markets, tramways, hospitals, cemeteries, parks, museums, art galleries, libraries, reading-rooms, schools, docks, harbours, rivers, etc.

3. The provision of abundant facilities for the acquisition of land by local rural authorities for allotments, common pastures, public halls, reading-rooms, etc.

Amendment of Political Machinery.

Object.
To obtain the most accurate representation and expression of the desires of the majority of the people at every moment.

Means.
1. Reform of registration so as to give a vote, both Parliamentary and Municipal, to every adult.

2. Abolition of any period of residence as a qualification for registration.

3. Bi-annual registration by special public officer.

4. Annual Parliaments.
5. Payment of election expenses, including postage of election addresses and polling cards.

6. Payment of all public representatives, parliamentary, county or municipal.

7. Second ballot.

8. Abolition or painless extinction of House of Lords.

Every one of the proposals in this programme has been individually approved by Liberal leaders of high political standing. What is in question is how much of it the party is yet prepared for. This it is for the Liberal Associations and other popular organisations to answer, by passing resolutions on the subject. If the leaders are to prepare the programme, it is for the rank and file to let the leaders know what the people really want.

11. The Parting of the Ways.

One thing at least is clear. Whatever may be the opinion of the old-fashioned Liberal, nothing but a generous and frank adoption of a "Labour Programme" will win the confidence of the London masses. The Liberal party stands now once more at the parting of the ways. It must either abandon the hope of general popular support, or else make clear to the masses that its interests are the same as theirs, and its programme their programme. No mere half-hearted compromise will now remove their suspicion and conquer their alienation. It is not alone the dry enumeration of a few advanced measures that will suffice, but a wide and frank adoption of their hopes and aspirations, not merely commanding their intellectual assent but appealing to their emotions. It was such a policy alone that could conquer generations of suspicion, and bring within two years the whole (sic) Irish people to Mr. Gladstone's feet. In London we
have another five millions almost as completely alienated from our ranks as were the Irish people in 1884. The Liberalising of London is at least as important to the success of Mr. Gladstone as was then the Liberalising of Ireland, and it can be achieved only by a similar treatment. Mr. Gladstone can in this way, if he will, fire the "topless towers" of this great city with as warm a glow for his party as burns from Cork to Donegal; without such generous ardour and earnest recognition of the real popular grievances there is no hope for London Liberalism.

A FEW WORDS ON MR. WEBB'S "PURELY REVOLUTIONARY SCHEME."

1. The revolutionary measures advocated by Mr. Webb might benefit temporarily bureaucrats and demagogues but, if adopted, they were certain, unless the very individualistic people of Great Britain were miraculously converted into a nation of altruists, to produce, at the best, an orgy of corruption and jobbery. Moreover, everyone in Mr. Webb's paradise, with its annually elected and, presumably, omnipotent House of Commons, would live in a state of insecurity.

2. A profound thinker, Mallock, criticising a statement by some writer that we have "got the wealth" and "our business is to make the best use we can of it," observes:—

"Persons who use such language as this are living in a land of dreams. To their eyes the wealth of a country like modern England resembles a marble column, which will stand up erect for ever when once placed on its pedestal. What it really resembles is a column of water forced into the air by the action of complex and unresting mechanisms—mechanisms which a careless or hostile blow might dislocate, and any dislocation of which would cause the column to collapse." (The Limits of Pure Democracy, p. 311.)

To Mr. Webb's eyes the wealth in the British Isles resembled a marble column!
Elsewhere, Mallock points out that it is a "pure delusion" that:

"the will of the people . . . can . . . determine government in whatever manner it pleases . . . As soon as any nation returns from destructive [i.e., revolutionary] activities to constructive, the unlimited powers which are claimed for the mere force of numbers, as arrayed against authority external to themselves, disappear. The first thing which the masses of a people must do, when they are hoarse with proclaiming their freedom to do whatever they like, is to cringe to an authority which enforces on them the continuous production of food . . . This authority is based on two things, against which a million wills are as powerless as the will of one, the first being the needs and structure of the human body, the second being the constitution of Nature, and in particular of the earth's surface . . . No popular will could abolish the business of agriculture . . .; and . . . the power of the people is limited no less stringently . . . in respect of the production of superfluities . . . The production and multiplication of the comforts and luxuries of civilisation are possible only through the action of a knowledge and intellect which achieves an effective force in the persons of a few men only; and it is only on condition that the people obey these few that such superfluities can be either produced at all, or produced in sufficient volume to satisfy the appetites of the multitudes clamouring for a share of them . . . So far as the production of necessaries is concerned, the powers by which masses of human beings are compelled to perform productive work represent a pressure put upon men by Nature—by Nature which, with various degrees of severity according to soil and climate, flogs them into labour of some simple and orderly sort, as the sole alternative to death. So far as the production of superfluities is concerned, these powers represent the monopolist possession by a few of that rare directive capacity, obedience to which by the many alone renders an abundance of such superfluities possible, and which compels the many, as the price of obtaining them, to obey. The authority, in short, of industrial oligarchy has its basis in the simple fact that, unless the many submit to it, they extinguish every chance of gaining what they are determined not to lose."

Mr. Webb assumed that the will of the people could determine government in whatever manner it pleased!
3. Needless to say, the lessons of human experience had been lost on Mr. Webb. Up to 1888—how any successful Communist or Socialist experiment would have been advertised!—Communism and Socialism, except in very primitive societies or where the experimenters had been deeply religious, had been found to be impracticable. A few years later a Communistic experiment on a small scale was, under very favourable conditions, made in Paraguay by William Lane and his "New Australians." It was a dismal failure.

Some three decades after Mr. Webb's pamphlet was privately circulated, another Communistic experiment, this time on a gigantic scale, was made—or affected to be made—by Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades. As the Bolsheviks were able to corner in Russia the terrible lethal weapons of the Twentieth Century, and as they had—and have—no scruples in murdering and torturing their unarmed opponents, the Bolshevik experiment has lasted longer than Lane's. Even Socialist visitors to Russia, like Mr. Joseph Toole, M.P., admit, however, that Russia under the Bolsheviks is an appalling place to live in.

Below are some extracts from Mr. Joseph Toole's article, "What I saw in Russia," published in the Daily Herald of 28th August, 1930.

"I have returned profoundly shocked. From the time I embarked on a Russian ship, managed by committee of the unseen crew, to the day I crossed to Poland I could see nothing but incompetence, insecurity, insanitation, disease and want. . . .

"The fact is that Russia has shed one despotism for another. The colour is changed; Red has superseded Black.

"During my stay in Moscow a Red Revolutionary Trades Union world's congress was in session. Over 30 of the delegates came from England. The conference bore
the motto: ‘We bring to the World Capitalism not peace, but a sword.’ Very well; but what has this special branch of Communism brought to Russia?

"The State there is held by the sword and the rough brutal bludgeon. No personal liberty exists: there is only room for one view, the Soviet view. You may do anything you wish in Russia, providing you do as you are told. Workmen working in gangs, resenting their conditions and protesting, are one day simply ‘missing.’

"I never saw a more dirty, unkempt, motley crowd than the Russian town dweller, or more beggars, mendicants, or drunks in the main streets of any city; and I have visited most cities in Europe and America.

"Female labour abounds. Women clean the docks, conduct the trams and plough the fields. The majority of them are stockingless, many shoeless; and small wonder when you learn the price of these things.

"Don’t imagine the classes are abolished in Russia—nothing of the kind. The ‘boss’ class still exists, but its form is changed. The State is now bossed by ex-trade union leaders of revolutionary times. They don’t go short of good food or a long vacation. But what of the illiterate 80 per cent? . . . .

"Materialism is rampant. Sunday is abolished, divorce may be had for the asking. . . .

"In spite of all this, it may well be that this system is the best for Russia, but, when I hear the English disciples of Lenin recommending a similar system for our own country, methinks all their conferences should be in Colney Hatch."

Mr. Toole’s statements are confirmed by a very great number of truth-telling visitors to Russia. If such is the state of things in that vast, sparsely-populated and self-supporting country, what would happen in this little, over-populated island, so dependent on foreigners for food and raw materials, should it come to be permanently ‘bossed by ex-trade union leaders’?"