

What socialism means

The object of socialism is to unite humanity and to solve social problems by building a society which can satisfy the universal need for co-operation and material security.

Socialism involves a creative outlook concerned with the quality of life. In association with others, the individual will develop himself as a social being. With enlightenment and knowledge, man will replace the ignorance, false illusions and prejudice from which he suffers in our own day.

Socialism is the form of society most compatible with the needs of man. Its necessity springs from the enduring problems, the economic contradictions and social conflicts of present-day society.

Socialist society must be based upon the common ownership and democratic control by the whole community of the means of life.

Life will be based on human relationships of equality and co-operation. Through these relationships, man will produce useful things, construct amenities and establish desirable institutions. Socialism will resolve the conflicts which at present divide man from man. Regardless of ethnic or cultural differences, the whole world community will share a common interest.

Under capitalism the whole apparatus of production are either privately owned, as in America, or state controlled by a privileged minority, as in Russia. The economies of some countries combine both private and state control. Both forms are alien to the interests of the majority, since the priorities of trade and commerce, exploitation and profit-making, dominate life. Under both forms, production for sale on the market is organized primarily for the benefit of a privileged minority.

The building of Socialism requires a social reorganization where the earth's resources and the apparatus of production are held in common by the whole community. Instead of serving sectional interests, they are made freely accessible to society as a whole. Production will be organized at world level with co-ordination of its differing parts down to local levels.

In Socialism there will be no market, trade or barter. In the absence of a system of exchange, money will have no function to perform. Individuals will participate freely in production and take what they need from what is produced. The fact that Socialism will be based on common ownership does not mean that an individual will have no call on personal effects. It means essentially that no minority will have control over or possession of natural resources or means of production. Individuals will stand in relation to each other not as economic categories, not as employers and employees or buyers and sellers, but simply as human beings producing and consuming the necessary things of life.

Socialist society will minimise waste and set free an immense amount of human labour. Armies and armament industries with their squandering of men and materials will be swept away. These will disappear together with all the wasteful appendages of trade and commerce.

Work

Work is a human need not only because it produces the material things of life, but because it is through work that man expresses his social nature.

In present society, human labour-power is the source of profit. Economic antagonism causes strikes and lock-outs. The uncertainties of trade result in dislocation and unemployment. The present chaos

generates frustration and violence. Work becomes repugnant when carried on in this context of competition and exploitation. Life is a personal struggle.

In Socialism there will be a common interest in the planning and smooth operation of production. Work will be a part of human co-operation in dealing with practical problems. Work will be one aspect of the varied yet integrated life of the community.

With the change in the object of society, that is human welfare instead of profit, man will freely develop agriculture and housing, produce useful things and maintain services. As well as material production, man will freely develop desirable institutions such as libraries, education facilities, centres of art and crafts and centres of research in science and technology.

It will be a problem of social planning, statistics and research to ascertain the requirements of the community. Although these techniques are used for different ends, there is already wide experience of them. With experience of Socialist production, these planning techniques will gain in accuracy.

Once produced, goods will be transported to centres of distribution where all will have the same right of access to what is available according to individual need. It will be a simple matter of collecting what is required. As well as tradition and geography, it will be a matter of organization and practicality as to which things will require a complex world division of labour for their production and which things will be produced regionally.

Social values

The insecurities of our present acquisitive society drive men into ruthlessly selfish attitudes and actions which frustrate the human need for co-operation. With success in this competitive race goes a hollow pride; with failure there goes guilt and stigma. Against this background the failure is general because where the individual is isolated, co-operation breaks down.

Socialism will establish a community of interests. The development of the individual will enhance the lives of other men. Equality will manifest attitudes of co-operation. The individual will enjoy the security of being integrated with society at large.

Institutions

The establishment of Socialism does not call for the complete destruction and reconstruction of society. Techniques of production and some of the machinery of administration which can be transformed already exist. The task is to allow their free use and development by and for the community. With the change in the object of society from profit to human welfare will come a change in the function of social institutions. The schools and universities will no longer be concerned with the training of wage and salary workers for the needs of trade and commerce. Education will be a social amenity for life, providing teachers and a storehouse of all accumulated knowledge and skill. Education will not be rigidly separated from other aspects of life. The provision of education facilities will call for some permanent specialists, but knowledge and skill will to a much greater extent be passed on by those actively engaged in their practical application. Education will be tied more closely to the whole process of living.

There will be a body concerned with safety, the co-ordination of services in the event of an emergency, traffic regulation and the like. Here again, whilst some specialists may be required, it will be desirable for members of the community to participate as part of the normal pattern of their lives.

Institutions such as the armed forces, customs, banking, insurance, etc, will become redundant. Socialism will continue those institutions necessary to its own organization. For example, the Food and Agricultural Organization could be expanded to submit plans and execute decisions concerning world food production.

World unity

Socialism will end national barriers. The human family will have freedom of movement over the entire earth. Socialism would facilitate universal human contact but at the same time would take care to preserve diversity. Variety in language, music, handicrafts, art forms and diet etc will add to all human experience.

Democratic control

Socialism will be democratic. World policies will be subject to the control of the world community. The most complete information relevant to all issues under discussion will be made fully available. Elected delegates will carry local viewpoints to a world congress where the broad decisions on all aspects of social policy will be made. From that point, the social machinery would be implemented to carry out these decisions, subject to democratic control through both local and world bodies. Decisions affecting only local interests would be made democratically by the local community.

Whilst the general direction of social policy will be decided by the whole community, many decisions will be technical ones arising out of the problem of this policy. These decisions can be left, subject to regular democratic checks, to men and women with specialized knowledge and experience; but given the whole context of Socialism, they could only be consistent with its general aim--human welfare.

The elimination of vested interests will mean that men will have no ulterior motives influencing their decisions.

The challenge of Socialism

The greatest challenge facing humanity is the need to increase the production of wealth on an enormous scale, but this cannot be done within present capitalist society. Men and resources serve profit. On all sides it can be seen that commerce, trade and vested interests are preventing man from expanding production on a scale necessary to serve the community's needs. Socialism will provide a social framework that will enable man to get on with the job. The initial task of producing enough goods for the whole human family will be a huge one. We do not underestimate the problems of organization and production involved, but to eliminate world poverty must be one of the first tasks of Socialist society.

It is the glaring contradiction of our times that wealth is socially produced but possessed by a minority. Whereas in science, technology and in the development of the means of production man has brilliantly asserted his genius, in his relationships man suffers an abiding failure. It is this failure which is expressed in war, nationalism, racism, world hunger and poverty, unemployment, industrial chaos and social disunity. In all history, man has never suffered such universal frustration whilst having so close at hand the means of building a better world.

(July 1973)