



Socialism versus Tariff Reform

Being a Report of a debate between J. FITZGERALD, Representing the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and Mr SAMUEL SAMUELS, Prospective Conservative Candidate for Wandsworth, on Tuesday, May 21st, 1912, held at Tooting Graveney Schools, Tooting, S.W.
Chairman: Rev. C. Williams.

THE CHAIRMAN.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thought that this fine night would have tempted the ladies to keep outside so as to look at the rag-shops. I am glad, however, to see that a good many ladies are here, and their presence will, no doubt, help to make the meeting an interesting one.

To-night we shall have the privilege of listening to a debate on the respective merits of Tariff Reform and Socialism, which should, to everyone here, be deeply interesting and instructive. I find from the Agenda paper that there will be two gentlemen who will occupy your time and attention on this matter of great importance, and who, I think, will need little introduction from me. I hope they will be able to engage all your attention and fill up your time profitably. I find that so liberal is the time allowed to each that it will tax all our powers to follow all they have to say, and if, therefore, we only remember one half of what we hear, we shall go away wiser men and women than we were when we entered this room. I ask for them a fair hearing, and on my part I promise you I shall show no favour to either. I shall ring this bell two minutes before the allotted time to remind them that their time is drawing to a close, and when I again ring it their peroration must at once cease, and the speaker must sit down. I begin by calling upon Mr. Fitzgerald to speak from the Socialist side for thirty minutes.

MR. FITZGERALD.

Mr. Chairman, Friends and Fellow Workers,

Opening this debate as the representative of the Socialist Party, it falls to me to deal with some of the elements of the proposition contained in the subject for debate, and first of all we have to ask what is the meaning of the phrases "Socialism" and "Tariff Reform."

By Socialism we mean a society based upon the common ownership of the means of production and distribution and their democratic control by the whole people. On the other hand, Tariff Reform is a system of taxation within the existing system of society, and does not propose any fundamental alteration of that society itself.

At the first glance there might appear to be nothing in common between these two subjects, seeing that one is a whole society while the other is a portion of the working of existing society under certain conditions. There is, however, something in common between them. If you look around you to-day, practically all the world over, no matter how the details of the system you are looking at may vary, one startling fact will confront you, and that is that on the one side we have enormous powers of wealth production, powers unequalled in any age of the past. It is a fact beyond dispute that we can to-day produce wealth in quantities undreamt of in any previous period of the world's history; and so marvellous is this power of wealth production as compared with the past, so rapid is the change from one aspect of society to another due to this power, that the whole face of civilisation can be completely changed within a generation. Only a few days ago it was reported in the newspapers that there had been released in Italy a man who had been imprisoned for thirty-five years, and the sight of the streets, of the enormous volume of traffic, dazed him completely, and the appearance of a moving motor car nearly sent him into a fit—the **condition** of things having been so completely transformed while he had been in prison. I repeat, not only are the powers of wealth production greater than **ever** they were, but the quantities of actual wealth produced are every where enormous. This is the phenomenon which confronts **you** on one side, and on the other side you have another fact, equally true and indisputable—it is this: Along with the marvellous increase in the powers of production, coincident with the increase in the quantity of wealth actually produced, you have misery, poverty, want, actual destitution, insecurity and degradation, all the world over, wherever you care to look. These are the first facts I want you to grasp: the curious paradox of unparalleled powers of producing wealth existing side by side and at the same time with misery, hardship, and poverty in every shape and form.

I do not profess to be an authority on this matter; I do not ask you to accept my word that these things are so. I propose quoting you conclusive evidence on this matter from people whom you will in all probability agree with, no matter whether you are a Conservative or a Liberal. We are told by one individual that:—

This is the richest empire under the sun. If there is poverty, misery, and wretchedness, it is not because the land is sterile, and bare and does not provide enough for all. The next fact is that there are millions of men and women in this country who, through no fault of their own, are suffering unnecessarily.

Another statement made by the same gentleman is:—

To-day you have greater poverty in the aggregate in the land than you have ever had. You have oppression of the weak by the strong. You have a more severe economic bondage than

you probably ever had, for grinding labour to-day does not always guarantee sustenance or security. . . . That condition of things was foreign to the barbaric regime of the darker ages.

The gentleman who made these statements is fairly well known: his name is Mr. Lloyd George, and they were uttered at Cardiff on December 29th, 1911.

He, however, is not the only one to make statements of this character. I will give you another quotation.

When I first entered political life my first business was to try to ascertain the causes of that misery. . . . And what was the outcome of my studies? I found a people so wedded to the wretched gospel of cheapness that their standard of living had sunk to a degraded level; I found a system of Poor Law administration so unsound and so unscientific that instead of checking pauperism it breeds paupers, and so unfair that it makes no distinction whatever between the man who can work but won't, and the man who would work but can't. I found the workhouse the final goal, the last reward of honest old age.

This is a statement made by Mr. Claude Lowther, Chairman of the Anti-Socialist Union, and you will note it supports in its essentials the previous quotation I gave you.

These are admissions made by men well known in the political field— forced from them by the sheer hard facts —as to the position of the workers in this country—an admission of wide-spread, deep, and lasting poverty and the evils which accompany poverty of this character; and if these facts **be** true, then the first point of our enquiry is to ask ourselves how an alteration of the system of taxation (for this is what Tariff Reform is) will alter or touch in any way, the essentials of the problem.

The working class in this country, by the admissions of other men whom I could also quote (none of whom are Socialists), has sunk to a degraded level of poverty **unmatched** in the previous history of this country; but low and degraded as that level is, you KNOW from your own experience that you have no security even at that. You KNOW that, no matter what industry you may be engaged in, no matter how skilled **you** may be, you are never sure of your job from one week to another. You KNOW that it becomes increasingly difficult to get a job when you are out of work, and more difficult to retain it when you are in. The age of employment is ever pressing to a lower and lower level; to-day you are not only too old at fifty or at forty, but, as the Westminster Labour Exchange reported not long ago, you are, for certain trades, too old even at thirty.

This is the condition of the workers here, but these words apply to other countries as well. If you take the country which is better situated than this, where there is a whole range of climatic conditions from equatorial to polar, where the natural resources are in every respect much greater than here (I mean the United States of America) you will find there essentially the same conditions as I have described.

I will read you an extract from a very conservative publication from America, Harper's Magazine. Writing therein in May, 1912, a Mr. R. W. Bruere, referring to an interview he had with a manufacturer, says: —

Since becoming part of the combine we have been fortunate in being able to give employment nearly the entire year, from year to year, to most of our skilled mechanics. You

see, we seem to be the pet shop of our management, and if there is any work in the market we usually get first chance at it. Of course there are plenty of shops throughout the country that have been closed down entirely, or that operate only when times are busy. But I hardly think that our city is a good example of the domestic instability that industrial concentration has generally brought about. . . . Two years ago the shops had given work to 3,000 men, but that for reasons of administrative efficiency they were being reorganised, and that to-day only 1,000 men were working. **There** was a fluctuation in two years equal to almost one half of the adult male population of the city.

In New York an extensive enquiry was held into the question of unemployment, and upon the facts the Commissioners came to the conclusion that:

Unemployment is a permanent feature of industrial life everywhere.

The reports of the New York State Department of Labour, covering a period of seven years, show that in ordinary times at least 15 per cent, of the organised workers of the State are idle during the winter months, while even during October, the month of maximum industrial activity, the percentage of unemployment amongst skilled workers does not drop below 5 per cent. During years of panic and industrial depression, the limits both of maximum and minimum employment rise sharply, and the recorded idle among the best trade unions range from 15 to more than 35 per cent. These figures deal entirely with skilled workmen. No comparable data were procurable to show the extent to which the unskilled suffer from worklessness. Such facts, however, as the Commission was able to gather furnish an interesting index to the truth. During 1910 the Free Municipal Lodging House in New York City gave shelter to more than 33,000 homeless and penniless men and women, most of whom, though unemployed, were by no means unemployable. In this same year the Salvation Army had 5,000 applicants for work, for only 500 of whom it was able to find places, and the National Employment Exchange, an agency conducted at great expense by a small group of financiers, found work in eighteen months for only 4,657 out of 24,000 applicants.

You will see, therefore, that if you take the case of the most favoured nations of the world, geographically and commercially—the United Kingdom and the United States of America—with their immense natural advantages, the one with Free Trade and the other with tariff walls, you will find that so far as the working class in the respective countries are concerned, the same conditions of insecurity of employment, unemployment, distress and hardship exist, and if this is **so** (and the testimony that it is so is universal), then it is obvious to every thinking man and woman that the cause of these conditions and this poverty must be deeper than the advocate of Tariff Reform cares to probe.

To get at this cause (which is part of our object to-night) we have to ask ourselves the question: “Who is it that bears the hardship and poverty? Who is it that suffers the misery?” If an individual of a simple type of mind came along and these questions were put to him, if he knew little or nothing of our commercial life, he would at once reply: “Why, it is the idle people who are in poverty, for evidently, if a man is willing to work, then, with the present powers of wealth production which you state we have, that man would be well clothed, housed and fed, and it is only the idler who would suffer from his want of exertion.” This is the answer that would probably be given by any ordinary, simple-minded person, but the correct answer, involving, as it does, a curious contradiction, is, that it is just the man who works the hardest who in reality is the worst off, and who has to bear the brunt of insufficiency and abject poverty. His share to-day is the poorest and the worst. On the other hand, it is the people who do nothing at all in the way of the production of the wealth of the

community who have the best of everything that human power can produce and human ingenuity devise. You are, therefore, confronted with this startling paradox, that those who do nothing at all in the field of production live under the best conditions, while the workers of the world, the men and women of the working class, have to be content with the worst.

This is the problem. We have to ask ourselves why this is so, and we have to ask ourselves what is the remedy. I repeat, before you can discover a remedy it is essential that you understand the cause. It is quite true you may exhaust the limits of error by experiment, in the hope that sooner or later something may turn up, that you may, by continual experiment, discover the right thing; but the best way, the scientific way, to ascertain the cause is by a thorough examination of the factors in ACTUAL OPERATION, and having by this method once found the cause, you will be in a position to apply the remedy.

What, therefore, is the cause of the working class every where being in the condition I have described? Is it because the worker does not work hard enough? Is it because he works too hard? What is it? You will find that, at any rate, it is not because men do not work hard enough, for men work harder, under greater pressure, and at a higher speed, to-day than ever before. Everywhere speeding-up has increased enormously. Owing to the progressive introduction of new machinery, the application of advanced scientific methods, the ever-increasing use of labour-saving appliances, and to combination and centralisation, not only is there a greater productive capacity of those employed, but there is a vastly greater quantity of wealth produced with an ever-lessening number of men. As I quoted you from Harper's Magazine, to-day 1,000 men do the work which required the efforts of 2,000 men a few years ago, and the results of this decreased labour are eminently satisfactory—to the employers.

Take your railway industry in this country. Over a period of nine years the tonnage carried has increased enormously, has increased by 53,000,000 tons as compared with a former period, while at the same time the number of men employed on railway systems has decreased by 8,000, showing a greater volume of trade with a decreasing number of men to carry it on.

The cause, therefore, of the poverty of the worker, is not that he does not work hard enough; it is not that he is lazy and does not look for work; it is not that he is unwilling to work: the cause lies behind all this.

I have just quoted you instances both from protected America and Free Trade England, and you find from these statistics, which are unimpeachable, that the conditions of the workers are not one whit better in one case than in the other. I think, therefore, that it is evident that it is not a question of taxation that we have to consider as a remedy for the evils around us. You have to-day the fact that the more you produce and the harder you work, the greater is your uncertainty of employment. I want to know why this is so. You might think that wealth is produced to satisfy human wants and desires, but while this is an essential condition of its production, yet the real reason and the main purpose of production everywhere is not primarily to satisfy human wants, but to sell the goods so produced at a profit. The man who owns and sells the goods does not care twopence whether they are useful to human life or not, and having sold, he is utterly indifferent to everything else. Goods, therefore, are produced for sale at a profit, and we have to ask why it is that goods are produced for this purpose. The answer is very simple. It is because those who own the means of production cannot consume all the wealth themselves, and, in fact, have no intention of doing so. The capitalist class may absorb or even waste wealth to-day to an enormous extent; they may indulge in every

conceivable extravagance, waste huge sums on every kind of folly, spend £20,000 on a single dinner as Mrs. Bradley Martin did; may buy necklaces of precious stones for their animal pets; but even then they can only consume a portion of the wealth produced, and have to find a market for the rest. The demands of the market are, however, limited; the power to satisfy the market increases far more quickly than the effective demand for the wealth that is produced; in other words, the powers of production, aided by science, have increased much faster than any increase made upon the market by an increase in population; so that the capitalist class itself is faced with this problem, that it is essential for them to employ less labour-power to satisfy those demands. They are unable to employ more than they do at present; they employ only those whose product can find a market. They themselves are confined within the boundaries of capitalist production, and consequently, only being able to employ a portion of the working class, whose number in employment is relatively diminishing, the other portion of this class must be unemployed as long as the system lasts.

The next point is: How is it that the workers have to produce to-day for sale? You know from your own experience that you cannot, even if you wish, go upon the land and employ your energy there, and the reason is that someone else owns the land. You know that you cannot go into the mills, factories and workshops and use the tools there without permission, because these belong, not to you, the workers, but to members of the master class, and, as the notice boards everywhere tell you, there is "no admittance except on business." You, as workers, cannot engage in production at all without the permission of someone else, and that someone else is, as you know, a member of the master class.

Here lies the great gulf: on the one side you have those who apply their labour-power to producing wealth, and who do not own any of the **means** used in the production of that wealth, or the wealth itself when produced; on the other side you have a class owning and controlling not merely the instruments of wealth production, but the wealth itself when produced.

As you know, you may work all the week or fortnight through, up to Friday or Saturday, when you take your wages, but although it is your labour-power, and yours alone, applied to the instruments of production, which has produced the wealth sold by the master, yet none of the things produced belong to you at all, but they belong wholly and solely to your employer. Even if he should refuse to pay you at the end of the week, you still have no right whatever to what has been produced, although it is the application of your energy which has resulted in its production. In a word, the working class owns nothing but its labour-power, and what is returned to the workers by the masters is, on the average, just sufficient to keep them in working order, to enable them to restore the used-up energy displaced in the labour process in the workshop. If you wish to go into the matter, to get proof of the accuracy of my statements, take the figures supplied by Mr. Chiozza Money, a Liberal M.P. He points out that the wealth (estimated, of course) brought into existence annually in this country, amounts to some £1,800,000,000, and of this the working class, even on a favourable estimate, does not get more than £700,000,000, so that there is the enormous sum of £1,100,000,000 going every year to a small, non-producing class, showing quite clearly that the trade, commerce, and industry, the wealth production of the country, are carried on wholly and solely for the benefit of a small section of society alone; the working class, forming the bulk of the community, getting, roughly, two-fifths while the master class takes the remainder.

If you go to America you will find that in this respect: the conditions are worse. If you take the statement of Henry Laurens Calls, you will find that under the process of the

centralisation of wealth, under the operation of huge combines and trusts, one per cent, of the population owns ninety per cent, of the entire wealth of the States, so that the position occupied by the capitalist class, both of this country and of America, under Free Trade and under Protection, is analogous, and the position occupied by the worker, the condition he lives in, the perpetual insecurity and fear of starvation, the fear of the workhouse, the poor dwellings, the poorest of the food supplies, and all the other disabilities, are analogous also.

What, therefore, is the solution? I claim that the solution flows easily and naturally from the statement of the case. If my points, my figures, my authorities, and my remarks are correct, then the simple conclusion, the only conclusion, that we can come to is that the workers should enter into the ownership and control of their production for themselves. This is the ONLY solution. This is Socialism. You may, as I have already stated, try every so-called remedy, every attempt at reform or at palliation, but if you are anxious for a removal of the evil, then you will agree that it can only be removed by getting away the cause; and as that cause is demonstrably the class ownership and control of the means of life by a small, idle class, who are able to keep you in a condition of subjection, so you have got to recognise this cause, to examine it, and having done so, to examine further the methods you should adopt in order to enter into that ownership for yourselves, and so put an end to the myriad ills which are your daily portion to-day. (Loud applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN.

I now call upon Mr. Samuels to address you for a similar period of half an hour.

Mr. SAMUELS.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

I have listened very attentively to my friend during the course of his harangue, and weighing the matter over carefully in my mind, I have tried to find, to discover in what he said, some argument or some reason why we should adopt the principles he advocates, or give our adherence to the cause of Socialism. This debate, as the chairman has told you, is on the subject of Tariff Reform or Socialism, and while I frankly admit that we have heard a powerful discourse concerning the injury, the disabilities and the hardships which the working classes suffer under at the present moment; I say, while this has been put very well, yet we have not heard (at least, that is my opinion) a single word or a single proposal from Mr. Fitzgerald showing us how he intends applying that which he so eloquently states will be the remedy.

I quite agree with him that there is an enormous amount of suffering—of unmerited suffering—and of want among the working classes, but because I admit it, because every one who observes at all must admit it, that is not to say that Socialism will be the remedy. I agree largely with his statements concerning the facts, but I differ entirely as to the proposed remedy.

He states that Socialism means the ownership and control of the means of wealth production by the community, but he does not tell us (or at any rate he has not done so so far—he may later on) how it is going to be operative, and it is on this head, a very important factor, as you must all admit, that I want to ask him some questions.

I repeat that Mr. Fitzgerald does not tell us by what means he is going to bring about the system he advocates. If such a system were at all possible, it might probably be that the whole community would join in bringing it about, for if he and his friends claim that there is only one remedy, and that remedy involves a complete alteration of society and a totally and radically different system to that which at present exists, then I think it is essential that we should know something of the method that is going to be put into operation to effect the change.

I just wanted to say that by way of introduction, for I do not propose going further into this question just at this stage. I want to keep to the subject under discussion. As you probably know, the great question to-day confronting all thinking men and women, is the question, the fact, that the population of this and every other civilised country—(laughter)—we will call them civilised if you like—the great question is that, with the exception of the United States (even there the population is increasing to a gigantic extent) the population is increasing at such a pace that it is utterly impossible to support it out of the land of the country. This is a fact beyond dispute, and applies especially to the United Kingdom, and this being so, we have to ask ourselves: What has been the result of this gigantic increase in the population?

I say without fear of contradiction that, so far as this country is concerned, it has caused those who have accumulated a certain amount of capital to come over here and, by perseverance, intelligence and thrift in ministering to the wants and desires of that ever-increasing population, to shape and establish those great industries—(laughter)—if you like I will admit they did it for their own benefit—establish those great industries that you see around you, and which nobody can possibly deny have found employment for the great majority of the working classes of this nation. I further claim that had it not been for the initiative displayed in this connection by those who have spent the best part of their lives in building up our myriad industries and our world-wide commerce, the poverty and distress we have, deplorable though it is, would have been as nothing compared with what would have been the case had the industry and commerce not been built up in the way it has. (Applause.)

This is the manner—by the application of endeavour, hard work, intelligence and thrift—in which this country has risen to its commercial supremacy, and here I would ask my friend (who is going to abolish all this) what he would do in the first instance by way of an introduction of his system of Socialism. I presume, and I think I am right in doing so, that under Socialism the whole system of Government would have to be radically altered. (Hear, hear!) I take it you would kick out the Unionists and the Liberals, and establish a Socialist Government. You would do away with all the employers of labour, whether they liked it or not, and, presumably, you would say to them: “Well, gentlemen, we do not want you at all; we can do without you. We are going to take over the factories, mines, land, and every kind of industry.” I presume this is what you would do, and if this is so, then the very first thing I would like to know is: Are you going to take these things over without paying for them, or are you going to pay for them? (Laughter.) If you propose to take them without paying for them then I have no hesitation in saying that it is downright robbery. If, on the other hand, you are not going to adopt this method of confiscation, but propose to pay for the industry you take over, then I want to know how is the working class going to be any better off, seeing that the payment for these industries would involve such a vast sum as would seriously overtax the energies of those who purchased and who intended paying for them. Let us suppose, however, that you are going to adopt the first alternative, are you going to the masters and will you say to them: “You must get out of this! You can take away what you

will, but we will keep the bricks and mortar, the machinery and so on, and work them for ourselves”?

Let us assume that this is what you propose doing. Well, what do you think will happen at the end of the very first week when you wanted to pay the workman his wages? (Laughter.) Would not the whole thing crumble to pieces? You must not forget that the foundation of all industry and commerce is one of those things which neither you nor I can do without, viz., money. You could not possibly carry on industry, or a business of any kind, unless you had the necessary capital to work it with. You know this as well as I do; but to prove to you the necessity of capital, which, apparently, you want, to do without altogether, let me quote you an instance from present-day life.

Take as an example that great nation, China. There you see at work that great reformer, Sun Yat Sen. He has declared that he is going to establish a system of Socialism there for the benefit of the teeming millions. But what has happened the moment he takes the first step to put his scheme into practical shape? He finds that in that vast territory there are thousands upon thousands of acres of land—fertile and good land—altogether uninhabited. At the same time there are in other parts of the country, millions of people crowded together in confined areas. Noticing these facts, he recognised that the first thing he must do is to get the people away from the crowded on to the uninhabited areas, so as to enable them to till and cultivate the soil, and so increase the nation’s resources. This is his first problem, and in looking about for a solution he finds that, although the uninhabited land is there in vast stretches, it is altogether unavailable, and the reason it is unavailable is because they have no capital in China to develop the country’s resources, and to make the roads and railway systems which are a fundamental and necessary preliminary for the distribution of the people. The result is that this vast country is brought to a standstill in every one of its departments for want of the necessary capital, and must remain so until that capital is forthcoming. I mention this instance just to show how essential it is that capital, together with the initiative, the application and the brains of the capitalist, should be forthcoming before you can have that wealth or that increase of wealth which my friend says is brought into existence by the labourer alone.

Now let us come back to the question of this country, because, in reality our discussion ranges round the condition of the people here and the methods for removing the hardships under which they suffer. And first of all I want to know how a Socialist government, having wiped out the capitalist, having wiped out the Conservative and Liberal parties, and taken possession of everything—I want to know what are the measures it is going to introduce to effect its object? I presume you would have to have some form of government, for it appears to me that it is impossible to do without it. That being so, I would ask my friend on what lines is it going to be constructed. Are you going to have a one chamber House or a two chamber House? Are you going to have a House of Commons and a Senate or what? If you take my advice you will have the two, because in my opinion a Second Chamber is necessary to check the deliberations and scrutinise the laws passed by the first. You will therefore require some sort of government, and some sort of a body in which the measures you introduce are discussed and passed into legislation. You will on this assumption naturally require someone as head of the State—a Prime Minister—and also heads of departments corresponding to the present Cabinet. Having got your government, how are you going to regulate the working of the different departments which are absolutely necessary to secure the well-being of the community? Turning from government to the field of industry, how are you going to pay the workmen? All around you **to-day** you see workmen exhibiting every grade of skill and being paid in proportion to the skill they exhibit. You have to-day men in your textile, engineering

and other industries earning beyond dispute £3 to £4 a week, and this, as you know, is due to the relative skill they possess.

Now, under Socialism there **is** apparently going to be a radical alteration in all this, and I am anxious to learn how you are going to do it. Take the differences which exist in wages to-day; are you going to raise the wage of the unskilled worker to the level of the skilled mechanic, or do you intend to reduce the skilled artisan so far as his wages are concerned to the level of the agricultural labourer? Questions like these, and they could be infinitely multiplied, although usually ignored by the advocates of Socialism, do, in my opinion, require an answer from those who advocate a complete alteration of society, and yet, up to the present at any rate, my friend has not so much as referred to it.

We are told that to-day all men should have a living wage of 30s. a week, and that this amount should be the minimum. I want to know if it is to be the maximum as well, and if so, do you think for one moment that the skilled mechanic in any trade would consent to have his wages reduced to this level? Who, under this magnificent system, is going to do the necessary work of the sanitation of the streets? Is this going to be confined to one section of society? It appears to me that no matter how you arrange your society, the gentleman who has the ability to rise to the position of a capitalist is most certainly not going to do the work of a scavenger, and you are therefore bound to have just those distinctions, just those grades with their varying remuneration, which it is the object of your advocates to destroy.

Mr. Fitzgerald says that in this, the richest country in the world, according to Mr. Lloyd George, we have a greater amount of poverty than ever we had before. I am not going to discuss Mr. Lloyd George at present, but when the question of oppression is mentioned, the oppression of one section of society by another—what he calls economic bondage—I state, and I think my statement will be confirmed by everyone in this room, that under the law every man is a free man, and that there is no oppression of any kind whatever by members of the capitalistic class (disorder). If there is oppression it comes from the working men themselves and is inflicted by them upon other members of the working classes. Let me give you an example. We have in London under the Port Authority, a number of men known as lightermen (you know what a lighterman is; he is a man who works on the Thames, taking barges up and down the river). Under the old laws these men practically had a monopoly of the traffic of the river, everybody being required to show his capacity and to take out a licence if he engaged in this particular trade. Their freedom was to all intents and purposes equal to anyone else's, and if you are going to call men like these slaves because they have to work for their living, then it is equal to saying that everyone is a slave. Now what are they doing at the present moment? These "slaves" at the present moment are earning a very considerable wage. These "slaves," as my friend calls them, up to a little while back, when the Port Authority was constituted, received their licences from the Corporation of London, and anyone who proved himself fit by apprenticeship to carry out the required work received his licence without question and became a waterman on the river. Well, a little while ago this authority was transferred to the Port of London Authority, who have been in the habit of granting certificates to qualified men much in the same way as the Corporation. Now the lightermen have a trade union, and for some reason or other this trade union comes along and says: "We will not recognise the certificates given by the Port Authority to men outside the trade union,"—with the result that trouble has ensued. Moreover, as there were not enough lightermen to carry on the work of the river, a number of men came up from Grimsby Dock and got their certificates in the usual way. They were told they must go to the union and take out a union ticket. They did this and went to work, but, strange to say, the men found, or at

least some of the union leaders did, that they had more lightermen than they thought necessary or desirable, and they said, we are going to take away some of these men's tickets because this is a closed port: we have got quite enough men to do the work and we are not going to have other men come in at, all.

Is that capitalistic tyranny or workmen's tyranny?

I think that no one will say that it is the capitalist oppressing the working man. On the contrary, all the evidence goes to show that it is the working men of this country who unfortunately oppress one another. Look around you to-day in any direction you like and I defy you to point to a single instance in which an employer of labour has used his power to oppress a member of the working class. As you know, the workers have very strong organisations, and if such a thing ever did happen, these organisations would take the matter up immediately, the result would be a strike, and there would be every kind of pressure brought to bear upon an employer who had thus abused his position.

Now my time is limited, and I shall accordingly have to deal with the matter briefly. I will not go into the article which Mr. Fitzgerald read from Harper's Magazine: I haven't the time; but there is one thing he stated which I must not pass over, and that is the, question of unemployment in New York. Now New York is the only place in the United States which publishes statistics of this character, and this is a fact that you must recollect. Mr. Fitzgerald has told you of the enormous volume of unemployment which exists in that State, but he has not told you all the facts. What are the facts?

New York is the port of entry for the whole of the United States; all the people who go to America to seek employment land there, and when landed, being naturally out of a job, they are entered on the register as out of work, and so the figures are swollen to an enormous extent. Wherever, however, you go to any of the great industrial centres of that country, you will find that in every case the percentage of unemployment is very considerably less than the percentage, not only in New York, but in this country as well, and the reason for this I will refer to in a moment when I come to the question of Tariff Reform.

Again Mr. Fitzgerald states he has found the actual cause of the misery and distress which exist among the workers, and according to him this cause is the control by the capitalists of the instruments for producing wealth, which control they exercise simply and solely for their own benefit, without any regard to the condition of their employees. He further states that, having found the cause, the remedy is obvious. I entirely differ from him, however, as to the cause of these things. I deny emphatically that the capitalist is the cause of the ills that exist. In my opinion, the bed-rock cause to which these things can be traced is the over-population of this country. There are, beyond all question, more people here than the country can support, and this is proved by the enormous number of people who are now unemployed.

Mr. Fitzgerald further says that while the working classes produce everything, they produce it for the capitalist, and as the capitalist cannot consume it himself, no matter how extravagant he may be, he has to find a market to get rid of the wealth which has been produced. Well, I admit, and everyone here must admit, that it is utterly impossible for a man to consume all he produces. What would be the position of the baker if he had to consume all the bread he made? What would be the outlook of the tailor if he had to wear all the clothes he made? What would happen to the bootmaker if he had to wear all the boots he made? It stands to reason that in the complicated commerce of the world we all in our several industries have to

produce articles which experience has taught us are required somewhere, and so, having produced those articles, we do not consume them ourselves, but naturally try to discover a market, and the best we can, for the disposal of the goods so manufactured. This, by the bye, brings me to another question I would like to ask my friend. If you are going to adopt Socialism and do away with the commerce of the world as at present constituted, how are you going to carry on that necessary system of international relationships, business international relationships, by which the goods of the world are distributed to the various centres where they will be wanted? And what will become of your Socialism, what will become of the working classes of this or any country, if each of them is to consume the whole of the goods he produces? For after all, this is what in reality the argument of Mr. Fitzgerald comes to. He says, let us have the means of production, let the people consume the wealth they produce, and all will be well. This kind of argument may go down with inexperienced people, but if you take the system of trade as it exists to-day all over the civilised world, you will find that the wealth of this or any other country has not been produced by the workers of that country alone. I will prove it.

You will all admit that the basis of wealth, gold, is not produced here; you know that it comes from places like California, Australia, and South Africa, and as that is so, will any man here say he has had anything to do with the acquisition of the mines where this wealth was produced, with their development or with the acquisition of the wealth brought to this country as a consequence?

Everyone knows who has at all studied the matter that in the acquisition of wealth there are required not only the labour of the skilled or unskilled labourer, but also working capital, organisation, inventive capacity, and other things. Moreover, the returns to those who provide the capital is nothing like that enormous proportion which some people have stated it is. Take, as an example, the railways of this country. I had an argument once in Leeds with an alderman and some other gentlemen, and they brought forward the earnings of the L. & N.W. Railway Company and the amount the workers on that system received. I was told that in the year previous to the one of which we are speaking, this particular company had earned £15,000,000, out of which they only paid some £4,500,000 wages, and I was left to infer that the whole of the remainder was profit. Now this appears to be an appalling difference. If in reality the company is making something like 10½ millions profit and the whole of their employees only get 4½ millions, then there is certainly room for improvement. A moment's consideration, however, will show the fallacy of arguments of this kind. The 4½ millions represented wages they paid to their own workmen, but there was left out of account entirely the enormous amount the Company had to pay yearly for coal, the enormous cost of the upkeep of the line, the repair and renewal of its vast rolling stock, the cost of maintenance of its numerous buildings, stations, bridges, etc., and the thousand and one items of expenditure for stores of every kind that it has to meet every day. All this was left out of account entirely in the calculations of the gentlemen to whom I was speaking, and by the simple process of bringing them in I was able, I believe conclusively, to prove that after all, all that the shareholders got out of the vast sums mentioned was something like 3½ per cent, on their investments.

Instances like this could be repeated. Statistics are quoted to show you that the capitalists have vast incomes procured out of the labour of the working classes, when, as a matter of simple fact, these figures only exist in the imaginations of those people who will not take the trouble to go deeply into figures, but who make statements of this character in order to bolster up their case.

The bell has rung, and I have very little time now to deal with Tariff Reform, but when my opponent replies, there are two questions I would particularly like him to answer in connection with the system he advocates. How is his system going to bring the working man more wages and more employment, and how is it going to make any improvement in his position as compared with to-day? It appears to me to be based, from beginning to end, upon an utter misconception of the working of our industry and commerce of to-day, and even if it were not, it appears to me to be utterly impossible in practice, and the first attempt to realise it would only aggravate and make worse still those evils whose existence we all deplore so much to-day. (Loud applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN.

I will now call upon Mr. Fitzgerald to speak for the next twenty minutes.

Mr. FITZGERALD.

For one moment I want to deal with the closing **remarks** of my former speech. I pointed out that the working class have no access to the means of life, but that all the wealth produced is controlled by the master class. The question we now have to consider is—how is this done? How is it that the workers, numerically so much greater than the capitalists, remain in subjection in the conditions I have described, and how is it that the masters are able to dominate, and control society?

Briefly, the answer is because they hold political power, because through this political power they have the control, the domination and the direction of the armed forces of the nation—the Police, the Army and the Navy—and having this control they are able, not by intellect or ability, but by force, to maintain their supremacy and to shape and control society in their own interests.

This is the reason they occupy the favoured position, and the strange thing about it all is that it is the working class, who form the great bulk of the electorate, who, by their votes at election time, place this power in the hands of those whose sole object and interest is to perpetuate the condition of things you see around you, and who move heaven and earth to secure control of the political machinery in order that they may be able to effectively do. The voter is under the impression, that his interests are identical with the interests of those he sends to Parliament, when, as a matter of fact, no matter what label they give themselves, Liberal or Conservative, Radical or Labour Party, they are your enemies. There is a deep-rooted, fundamental antagonism of interests between you and them, as the whole of political history shows; and yet you give them the power to use, when occasion arises, the armed forces of the nation for the purpose of crushing you into submission whenever you show signs of resistance, or whenever their interests are in the slightest degree threatened. Cases in point are the late railway and miners' strikes, when the armed forces were placed at the disposal of the masters for the purpose of protecting those masters' interests.

To turn to one or two of the points that have been raised by my opponent. You must remember that it is much easier to ask questions in half an hour than to answer them in twenty minutes, but within the time allotted to me I will do my best. He states that my contentions have not furnished a single argument for establishing Socialism. Well, if the misery and degradation of the working class all over the civilised world, and which my opponent himself admits, is not an argument for the establishment of a system of society

where these things will be impossible, because their cause will have vanished—if this is not a potent argument, then I want to know what is. I further want to know what alternative proposal he has to offer to remedy these evils, a proposal which will bear scientific examination, which gets back to causes and which propounds a remedy based upon an actual investigation of the facts. What other proposal is there in existence to-day for removing the ever-growing poverty and distress of the workers? What other examination is there that sets out scientifically the cause of this poverty but the examination of the Socialist? What other proposal, I repeat, will remove the evil? Will Free Trade do it? You have had in this country over sixty years of Free Trade, with wealth increasing to an unprecedented extent, and coincident with that you have had increasing insecurity and a greater amount of poverty than before. In the face of this will anyone say that Free Trade will do it? Will Tariff Reform do it? Exactly the same evils exist in countries which are highly protected—France, Russia, Italy, the United States, and elsewhere. Will emigration do it, when distress is already rampant in Canada, Australia and other places where the emigrant usually goes?

I ask what remedy is there on the face of the earth but the one we propose? If it be a fact that the class ownership and control of the instruments of wealth production, the private ownership of the means of life in the interest of an idle class, is the cause of these things—and we claim we are able to demonstrate that this is the cause—then it is obvious to the meanest intelligence that so long as the cause lasts the effect must last also; and as Free Trade, Tariff Reform, and all the other panaceas offered you never attempt to touch the cause, but try to obscure it, so it is further obvious that they can be no remedy, and that men who advocate these things are content to leave the cause untouched, merely tinkering with the effects in the hope of patching the present system up and giving it a new lease of life.

Even, however, within, his own field of argument my opponent is wrong. He has asserted that it is impossible to support the population of this country on the land of the country, and that therefore it is necessary to establish industry and commerce. This is putting the cart before the horse. I would remind him of the fact, proved up to the hilt, that the population of this country is the result of the industry, and not its antecedent. The land, added to the great natural forces around us, is the great store house of wealth. All wealth is produced by the working class; the statistics show that more than sufficient is, and can be, produced to satisfy the wants of the community, and therefore the question of population, excess of population—is obviously not the cause of the poverty around us.

He further stated that the industries of this country give employment to a large number of workpeople, and talks as if employment was all the working class require. I ask him: Is employment such a brilliant thing that we should seek more of it? If so, why do not the masters rush to secure it? I know that employment is to-day necessary if a worker is to live, but workmen are human beings; they require something more than a daily repetition of mechanical toil in distasteful or dangerous surroundings. They require opportunities to develop in other directions, and these opportunities are, by the conditions of employment, the scanty wage, the arduous toil which saps the energy out of the labourer, and by the dismal environment to which he is condemned, denied him.

My opponent further says: How are you going to establish Socialism? The answer is quite simple — by getting hold of political power; by getting control of those forces which to-day allow the capitalist class to perpetuate its domination—to exploit the working class and keep them surrounded with those evils which are bound up with the present system of wage-slavery. There is no other way. As the industrial bourgeoisie had to follow and adopt this

method before they could free themselves from the shackles of a feudal aristocracy, so the working class in its turn must adopt this method to effect its emancipation. If there is any other way I should like to know what it is. To-day, with the marvellous efficiency to which weapons of warfare have been brought, and with the disarmament of the populations of the world, those who control these weapons control society. The capitalist controls society not because he is rich, but because he holds the reins which move the armed forces in whatever direction he likes. The essential condition, therefore, for the establishment of Socialism is the securing of political power by the working class.

Again, he asks, are we going to buy the capitalist out. Buy them out! Compensate Dick Turpin for picking your pocket! Does not my opponent know that the master class, the capitalists, rob the workers and live on the proceeds of that robbery? Compensation! We are not going to compensate, nor are we going to confiscate. Both these terms imply that an injury is being done to the masters. As a matter of fact it is the working class which has suffered the injury all through, and what we are going to do is to restore the property to its rightful owners whose who, by their labour, have produced it. Restitution is long overdue, and it in the height of impudence to talk about compensating men whose whole existence depends upon the robbery of the working class.

Then my opponent refers to money as being the basis of the wealth of the community. He evidently does not understand the function of money in modern society, and if I had time I should like to go into the matter. But I will pass it by with one remark—who makes the money? Who produces the metals from which the money is coined? Is it the masters? Do they go down into the earth and delve and sweat to produce those metals, or does experience teach us that it is the working class which does this? The next question is: Where are we going to get the money from to pay the weekly wages bill? It may surprise my opponent when I tell him that we are not going to pay wages. Socialism means the abolition of the wages system. Wages are the price of labour-power bought and sold upon the labour-market. We are going to abolish the labour market, the buying and selling of labour-power. The workers will produce, not for wages, not for a master who pays them wages, not for a pitiful sum which represents but a fraction of the wealth they have produced, but for themselves. And that being so, there will be no necessity for wages at all, no need for a system which, under the form of money wages, hides all it can of the brutal methods of modern exploitation and robbery which are the corner stone of that system.

My opponent then goes on to say that we cannot carry on industry without capital. What is capital? Leaving aside for a moment the Socialist definition, I will take the statement of one of the most expert defenders of capitalism, Bohm-Bawerk, head of the so-called “Austrian school of political economy,” given in his book, *Capital and Interest*. He points out that a certain sum is invested in business, and at the end of a year, after paying all expenses, including intellectual, as well as manual, labour, there is a surplus left for the investor. The sum invested is capital. Capital, therefore, is wealth used to obtain a surplus for which the owner has done nothing.

Capital is, in fact, wealth used for the purpose of robbing the working class, and we certainly propose to abolish that form of wealth. Does that mean that we shall abolish the means of production? Not at all. What will be abolished is the use to which a certain portion of the wealth now produced is put. Let me, however, take my friend’s definition of capital. He defines it as wealth used as the means of producing further wealth. All right, but I want to ask: where does it come from? What are the means used for the further production of wealth,

and who is it that uses those means? Who obtains the ore from the mines? Who smelts and obtains the metals? Who constructs the machinery, builds the factories, ships, bridges, railways, and the means of communication? Who runs the railways, navigates the ships, and carries on the distribution of the wealth obtained? There is only one possible answer to these questions, and it is that all these things are done by members of the working class. While, however, they do these things, they do them for the benefit of another class; they do them under the compulsion of living, under the pressure of economic circumstances. That other class reaps all the profit, leaving the worker just sufficient to live upon, and if, therefore, the working class do these things now for someone else, is there any difficulty in supposing that, when they have the knowledge of how they are robbed, and the determination to stop the robbery, they will make up their minds to produce for themselves only?

The next question carries with it an assumption. My opponent asks what sort of government would we establish. I ask him in return: What does he mean by government? Look around you to-day and you will see that all over the world governments are in fact but instruments of oppression in the hands of one class against another. The history of this country in the industrial arena during the last twelve months proves this up to the hilt. The continued use of the forces of the State—the police and military—against the South Wales miners, against the railway workers of this country and Ireland, against the miners during the last strike, against the transport workers and dockers now on strike, and against Labour wherever it protests against rotten conditions, shows quite clearly that the essential function of all governments to day is to maintain the ascendancy of a privileged class, utterly regardless of what that ascendancy means to the great mass of the population.

They may talk glibly to you about being concerned for the welfare of the worker, but if you get behind their talk to their actions (and it is actions that count), if you examine the whole history of industrial legislation in this country during the last century, the most striking fact of all is the continued brutality, the betrayal, the broken promise, the cynical indifference to the perpetual misery of the workers everywhere, and the murderous suppression whenever their discontent received articulate expression and was translated into the action of a strike.

That is the function of government, and I assure my friend that Socialism will certainly abolish government as understood to-day. When you get rid of slavery you naturally get rid of the instrument of that slavery, and there will then be an end to governments of that kind, for these governments mean oppression. What **you** will have is—management and organisation of industry for the benefit of the community.

If I am asked how will this organisation and management be carried on, it appears to me that the answer is quite clear. Those who produce the wealth, seeing that they have the ability to do so, will surely have the ability to carry out its organisation and distribution as well. As a matter of fact, it is the workers to-day who produce, distribute, and organise the industries of the nation. The owners of industries are in most cases either ornamental figureheads or idle shareholders in limited liability companies, and if, as time goes on, the workers are able to dislodge the masters, if they show sufficient solidarity, purpose, and intelligence to win in the great struggle (as undoubtedly they will), then, surely, as they are conscious of the purpose for which they have struggled, they will not only be able to thoroughly reorganise industry to their own advantage, but to prevent once and for all any attempt at oppression or domination whatever. Take a simple instance. The party to which I belong consists of men and women who are all Socialists; it is entirely self-managed by its members; it appoints by strictly democratic methods its own editors, its own organiser, and its own speakers. Does this mean

that we are governed? On the contrary, you may take it from me that the members of the party who occupy these positions are very much indeed the servants of the whole party. They are elected by the votes of the party, and the whole machinery is so devised that it is an impossibility for anything in the nature of “bossing” or domination to enter into its administration.

Another statement by my opponent is that skilled workers in industrial centres earn as much as £3 a week. Quite true! You do not want to go to Leeds for instances of this fact. Here in Tooting there are men earning this amount, but how many? What proportion do they bear to the rest of the population? When my opponent implies that this is the normal condition of skilled workers, I absolutely deny it. I say it is not true. I assert without the slightest fear of contradiction that there is not a single trade in England where the average wages equal any thing like this amount. You may take any industry you like, even the most skilled, and while it is true that here and there there are individuals a fortunate few—getting these high rates, they are the rare exceptions, and the average is enormously below these figures.

One of the most skilled trades in the country, the boiler makers, whose wage is at as high a level as, I suppose, that of the workers in any industry, actually went on strike a short time ago in an endeavour to improve their conditions, which were very considerably below the level of £3 a week. Take another instance, the cotton industry. You are told that the spinner earns £3 a week. He does. But you are not told that he has to pay two out of it. Go to a place like Burnley; try and ascertain what is the average weekly wage of the weaver there, and you will find that it is not £3 a week, not £2, but from 21s. to 24s. The men who pass this and get 30s. are lucky.

This brings me to Mr. Samuels’ next question: would the skilled worker be content with 30s. a week under Socialism? I have already stated that Socialism implies the abolition of the wages system, but I would remind my opponent that, even if he only got that, the skilled worker would be no worse off than he is to-day. To day, whether he likes it or not, he has to put up with it—that is, if he has employment. If he hasn’t got employment he has to put up with nothing at all. They can fight the employers as much as they like for higher wages, but as long as labour-power remains a commodity, the workers will only get what the conditions of the market enable them to get.

The next question of my opponent is an interesting one. He says that the capitalist will not do the work of the scavenger. Of course he won’t: he doesn’t know how! He hasn’t the ability. At the beginning we would have to find something simple for the capitalist to do, because he has had no training. If, after training, he will not work, then, if he is an ordinary man with the usual physical capabilities for work, he will have to try what fresh air is like to live upon.

My opponent made much of the alleged fact that every one in this country is free. I ask: free in what? Is he subject to the conditions around him? I take it that my opponent will admit that in that respect we are all subject, and if that is so, what becomes of the freedom of the worker when the conditions compel him to accept employment, and by that employment to submit to the terms laid down by those who control and own the instruments by which he lives? I claim that the facts prove indisputably that you are slaves to the master class. When the means of life are in the hands of another class, when the conditions of life lay it upon you as an imperative necessity that if you are to live you must (if allowed) use those means only upon the conditions arbitrarily imposed upon you; when at any moment you may, as you know only too well, be deprived of the opportunity to work, and your “freedom” becomes

translated into the freedom to starve if you don't quickly get another job; when you are victimised if you show the faintest signs of rebellion against the conditions; when the conditions impose upon you servility and when you have to submit to perpetual insult and misrepresentation when you try to improve ever so little your standard of living; when all these things operate against you and in favour of your master, then if this is what you mean by "freedom," the word is either a hideous joke or an insulting lie, and is but one of the catch phrases used by the masters in the old game of make-believe. It is quite true that if you like you can leave your employer, but the moment you do you are compelled to seek another. You can exchange masters, but you cannot, under present conditions, escape from the capitalist class. Moreover, the opportunities of getting another situation are daily becoming more difficult. Where will you get another berth if you are in, say, the Post Office and leave it? Where will you get a job if you are on the black list of employing federations? To talk therefore about freedom in the face of the facts all around you is to utterly misuse the word and to rob it of all significance.

You heard my opponent's statement about the reason for the high percentage, of unemployed in New York. As a matter of fact the statement is untrue. Let me quote you one more American publication: Wayland's Monthly. This publication, in giving the figures of the U.S. Bureau for 1904, makes the statement that unemployment, taken over the, chief industries of the States for a year, amounted to 49 per cent, of the working population of America. This shows that the evil of unemployment is not confined to any one country, and that it is a necessary resultant of capitalism.

THE CHAIRMAN.

Mr. Samuels will now speak for twenty minutes.

Mr. SAMUELS.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have again listened very attentively to our friend, and I have not yet learned from him very much of his system. We are told that because the fighting forces are in the hands of the capitalists they are able to control everything. I presume, therefore, that in the event of a Socialist State arising, there would not be any fighting forces at all. If this is so, then all I have to say is, that in all probability we shall see what some people call fun when the different members of the community fall out amongst themselves.

He says that the working classes do not want employment. Is employment, he asks, such a good and desirable thing that you should want more of it? And he goes on to state that he wants to do away with it altogether. Well now, ladies and gentlemen, this is a gross calumny on the working classes of this country. I say with the utmost conviction that the workman does not want to be pauperised, he wants to earn his living (interruption) in an honourable way, not to be dependent upon the charity of any one, and he is only too anxious to do so by honest toil. I assert there is not the slightest justification for Mr. Fitzgerald to say they are anxious to do without employment; on the contrary, my experience has taught me that what the average worker wants is full employment at a reasonable wage. I feel very strongly on this matter. I know the working classes from years of experience, and I cannot allow such a calumny on them to pass unchallenged.

There is, moreover, another remark of his to which I desire to take the strongest possible exception. He asserted again and again—in fact, his whole argument was based upon it—that the capitalist robbed the working man and lived on the best of everything out of the proceeds of that robbery. I am a capitalist; I have been engaged for years in various branches of commerce, and I tell any man straight to his face that if he has the impudence to declare that I got my wealth by robbing the working man, then he is a liar—he is not only a liar, but a scoundrel (laughter). He has invented a malicious falsehood to bolster up his case, to obtain some benefit for himself, or to mislead those people who are more ignorant than himself. I cannot allow such a statement to be repeated so many times as it was without the strongest protest on my part, for it is utterly false, from beginning to end. I believe that, in spite of their unfortunate differences, the vast majority of the working classes, together with the capitalists of this country, have a reputation for fair and honest, straight-forward dealing second to none in the world; all over the world, in fact, the capitalist is recognised as an honourable man, who loyally abides by his engagements, who obtains his wealth by hard and strenuous application to industry, and I will not, therefore, allow any man to impute to me or the class to which I belong, that that money has been obtained by dishonourable means.

Let me page to another matter, he stated that capital is wealth which the capitalist takes for himself after the payment, of the wages fund, and which he uses for the purpose of obtaining profit. Against this definition, however, I would put **that** of a noted economist—Adam Smith. Adam Smith says that capital is the result of thrift and parsimony, and this definition appears to me to be essentially correct. To-day there are dozens of men who earn money—plenty of money I mean—but who never become capitalists because they do not exercise those qualities of thrift and care which are necessary factors in the matter. It is a matter of experience that the wealth of this country has been accumulated by saving, for no man ever became rich, no capital was ever accumulated by men who spent money as fast as they made it; but it has been made by close attention to business, slow accumulation, keen business capacity, thrift and parsimony.

As I understand my friend, he would do away with all this; he would not recognise those qualities of business men which have made this one of the richest nations in the world; he would distribute the wealth as made, and if this is so, and I can draw no other conclusion from what he says, then the inevitable result would be that you would remain in the same poverty-stricken condition as you now are in.

He referred to the miners' strike: a strike, presumably for more wages. Now I know something of that strike. I came into contact with the men during that strike, and I say without hesitation that the strike was not due to low wages at all. As a matter of fact the men were receiving good wages, but the agitators got hold of them and told them that if they went on strike they were going to get a better rate of wages still; they were going to get all sorts of things. It was not the men who went out voluntarily, but the agitators who persuaded or compelled them to come out. I can tell you this without fear of contradiction from any quarter, for I know that the strike was actually imposed upon a large number of men entirely against their own wishes. But being settled by an open ballot, they were afraid to vote as they desired because of the threat of victimisation. In numerous districts the men were getting more than 5s. a day, which is the principle claimed and embodied in the Minimum Wage Act. Why they wanted to establish a principle when they were already getting more than that principle is one of those inexplicable things I do not profess to be able to unravel, but the fact remains that after weeks of suffering, after wholesale distress and an almost complete dislocation of the industries of the country, after inflicting upon people who had nothing

whatever to do with the trouble a vast amount of avoidable misery and want, after all these things they were compelled to go back to work in a worse condition than before. They were, I repeat, earning wages very much better than they could possibly earn under any Minimum Wage Act, but being misled by the agitators, they unfortunately had to suffer in consequence. When, therefore, Mr. Fitzgerald says that all the trouble was due to the capitalists refusing to pay a living wage, it is untrue, for as a matter of fact it was due to the working classes themselves listening too readily to the violent utterances of their leaders.

Now I want to turn and speak for a few minutes about the alternative policy we offer for the benefit of the working classes, and for the benefit of the country generally, as against the subversive doctrines of Socialism. Whatever Socialism may offer you in the remote future, it is not likely to be of much advantage to you now. I admit that it is quite easy to obtain a certain amount of sympathy by pointing out the evils which exist and offering all kinds of golden remedies for them; but I think the sounder policy to adopt is that contained in the lines of Shakespeare when he says: "It is better to stand or fall by the evils we know than to fly to those we know not of." Always, of course, doing our best to remove these ills as far as we can.

As has been admitted several times in this debate, we have an enormous amount of poverty in this country among the working classes, and the question, therefore, which appears to me to be the important one is: What means shall we adopt now whereby that poverty will be reduced to a minimum? It will, I think, be admitted that the test of a system is its results in actual practice, and I would therefore put before you two countries so that, by an examination of the conditions existing in each, you may be able to form your own opinion as to what line of policy is the best to adopt in pursuance of the object we have in view.

At one time of my life I lived in Borneo. The country there is as large as the whole of Central Europe, but it has only a population of some seven million people, just about as many as there are in the County of London. The natives of Borneo are rude, barbarous, and uncivilised to the last degree; they are utterly without that energy and initiative which characterise nations more advanced in the scale of civilisation. The tribes trek from place to place, living a hand to mouth existence. One year they may clear the jungle; another year they may cultivate their paddy fields; but through it all they never make any provision whatever against calamity of any kind, never exercise any forethought, but are content to go on leading a grovelling existence so long as they can satisfy their barest requirements. In addition, they are utterly without those finer instincts and ideals which European races have; human life has no sanctity whatever amongst them—it is of no value whatever. They are, in a word, content to lead a semi-bestial existence, consuming what they produce without any forethought so long as their immediate desires are satisfied, and they have been content to do this for hundreds of years. This is Socialism.

Now we, with all our drawbacks, do flatter ourselves; that we are civilised much beyond that; we, at any rate, do not allow our aged people to die utterly uncared for; we do not manifest that callous indifference to human, suffering and human life which is characteristic of those people. On the contrary, as you all know, we use the results of long years of scientific research to minister to the wants of the invalid, the sick, and the physically unfit, and because of our civilisation, because of the ideals we have bound up with that civilisation, we spare and save lives in every direction. In Borneo the doctrine of the survival of the fittest is practised in all its naked brutality, but here, thank God! we have civilisation and not

barbarism, and we do try, with all the strength at our command, to minimise in every way the evils that afflict us.

Let me now turn to another country. At present we have here in England a fiscal policy which has had over sixty years of opportunity to prove its intrinsic worth and superiority; a policy which is declared by its advocates to be the source of the commercial greatness of this country, and to have laid deep the foundations of its enormous wealth and world-wide commerce. But if you will get away from the glowing descriptions by enthusiastic advocates down to the bald facts, you will see that behind the figures offered us, behind the innumerable returns continually furnished to prove the superiority of Free Trade, there remains the indisputable fact that thousands of people are to-day living under conditions which can only be described as a disgrace to humanity. If the failure of any system whatever has been proved (and you must test success or failure by the amount of comfort and opportunity for enjoyment that that system brings into the lives of the great mass of the community) then it is an undoubted fact that Free Trade is one of the ghastliest of failures. Against this, and against Socialism, what does Tariff Reform offer you? We are not going to promise you that it will do away entirely with unemployment: this is utterly impossible, for the exigencies of industry and commerce are such that you have at one time a greater demand for labour than at another, and owing to the fluctuations which no man and no policy can control, you are bound to have among you a certain number of unemployed. While, however, this is so (and it is a fact to be deplored), yet, judging by the experiences of other nations, of every nation which has left behind it the antiquated doctrine of Free Trade which we still so foolishly adhere to, the amount of unemployment and all that unemployment means, is less, considerably less, than it is here. Whatever our opponents say to the contrary, we see it applied in those countries with satisfactory results. We see less unemployment, greater economic freedom, greater security of work. They have greater opportunities, through being protected, of utilising the labour of the country without undue interference from foreign competition—a thing which **is** essentially good for the working classes, and which would be eminently desirable here. Take as an instance of the other country to which I want to refer, that great nation, Japan, which, has lately established its position and is becoming one of the great countries of the world. We find there intelligent men slowly but surely building up great industries under the protection of tariff walls. Thirty years ago, when I first went to Japan, they were suffering from an increasing number of unemployed, but by steady application, by close attention to business, by hard work and the application of science to the internal affairs of the country, they have been able to throw off the yoke of the commercial treaties which for many years so seriously saddled their advance, and they have been able now to make new commercial treaties **under** which they have definitely freed themselves from the obligation to admit into Japan the manufactures and the products of Europe and America. The consequence of that protective tariff is that, whereas formerly there was a population falling over each other with scarcely any means of subsistence, at the present time they are putting up gigantic factories, weaving mills, iron foundries, and so on, and the trade, because of their system of production, has increased to such an extent that it is almost impossible to find unemployment in the whole of Japan at the present time (laughter). You may laugh because you are closed in here, and cannot go out there to see for yourselves; but I assure you it is a fact which can be supported by unimpeachable testimony. When, therefore, you say that you intend confiscating everything in this country, and you say to the capitalist: “You can go away somewhere else” (there will be no difficulty in that), the result will be that it will not be the capitalist, but the people, who will suffer from such an alteration. For everywhere the prosperity of the people (and Japan is a good instance) depends upon the amount of capital which can be invested in the industries of a country.

It will, I think, therefore be clear to you that the interests of the capitalist and the labourer are, to a large extent, identical. The labourer, as you all know, is dependent on the capitalist for employment, and therefore any attempt to confiscate or take away by unfair means that wealth which the capitalist has built up by the exercise of parsimony and thrift, by an intelligent study of the problems of the world, and by a close attention to business matters generally, would only recoil upon the heads of those foolish enough to make the attempt. I speak of these matters because I know what I am talking about, for the moment capital is threatened in one country, those who control the destinies of other nations would offer every inducement to the capitalist to go there and work industries whereby the populations of those countries would thrive and prosper.

Not only is this the case in Japan, but in every country which has adopted the policy of Tariff Reform the same results in a greater or lesser degree may be noticed. As the bell has rung I haven't time to develop this argument, but I claim that the system I am advocating would equally benefit all classes of the community, would steady and materially increase employment, would cause fresh industries to flourish and so do away to a very great extent with the poverty and misery which exist to-day. On the other hand, Socialism, being without any scheme of reconstruction whatever, being essentially destructive only, would, if successful, destroy the conditions which have brought the world to its present advanced state, those conditions which differentiate and distinguish the civilised man from the inhabitants of Borneo, and would consequently inflict untold injury on the human race. (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN.

Mr. Fitzgerald will now finish with his closing speech of ten minutes.

MR. FITZGERALD.

The first point I have to deal with is a personal one. Mr. Samuels took to himself the statement I made concerning the robbery of the working class. Now I have no knowledge whatever of the private affairs of Mr. Samuels; I have never seen him, before to-day, and it does not matter to me in the least what he is. But I assert and emphasise my assertion, that the capitalist lives only by robbing the working class. I hope that statement is clear and definite. Wealth can only be produced by the application of human energy to nature-given material, and if any man whatever gets wealth without applying his energy in this direction, then it is obvious that he can only live, that he has only got wealthy, by the exploitation of those who do apply their energy. The class which does the work to-day is the working class. The capitalist is not engaged in production at all. He never labours in this field, but he gets rich, and that being so, my statement is absolutely correct, and I challenge examination and contradiction from any quarter.

My opponent referred to what he stated was the true cause of the unemployment figures in New York; he asserted that these conditions were exceptional and were local to New York only, and that, moreover, New York was the only State that issued figures of this character. This is not so. Massachusetts also compiles these figures. But the report I quoted—the 18th report of the Labour Bureau—gave figures based on returns from thirty-three States. Let me give another quotation.

It has been customary in New York to adopt the conclusions of the Sage Foundation, that for an average working man's family consisting of two adults and three children, or four adults,

an income under 800 dollars in New York City is not enough to permit the maintenance of a normal standard; families having from 900 to 1,000 a year are able in general to get food enough to keep body and soul together and clothing and shelter enough to meet the most urgent demands of decency. . . The secretaries of 211 trade unions reported that . . . the actual income fell below 700 dollars in 25 per cent, of the membership, and reached 1,000 dollars in only 14 per cent. These figures . . . represent normal conditions. Moreover, they deal only with a group of skilled, and therefore well-paid, trades.

In the same magazine for March 1911 it states that a man applied to the United Charities of New York for sewing work for his wife, as he could not support his family on his wages.

Rubber work is his trade, and two or three years ago **he** earned 16 to 18 dollars a week. The rubber factories have gone into a trust and work has been very scarce. . . . He is employed as a porter at 40 dollars a month or 540 dollars a year in the United Charities Building. . . . When the case was submitted to the trustees they brought it to the attention of their agent, feeling, it seems, that the facts in the case were not altogether creditable. The agent, it is reported, explained that 45 dollars a month is the highest current rate for porters, and that to make the scale of the United Charities Building anomalous would bring his management into disrepute among business men.

Here was a man in work, and receiving the highest scale for his employment in New York, and yet without sufficient to maintain his wife and family in barest comfort.

You see the working class is always poor. When you are in work you are poor, when you receive your wages you are poor, and when you are out of work you rapidly sink below the poverty line. In a word, poverty haunts the worker from the cradle to the grave, and so long as society is constructed as it is, so long as one class can secure political control, and through that control dominate society, so long must poverty be the lot of the worker, and you cannot escape from it by any remedy whatever, for poverty and unemployment are essential conditions for the operation of capitalist production. Haven't I quoted you authorities from both the Liberal and the Tory ranks? Isn't it the admission of every man .and woman who seriously studies the problem to-day? And has my opponent, even in the slightest degree, attempted to point out the cause or to trace the matter to its root? No, as I have said, they will, inside the capitalist system, exhaust the limits of ingenuity in trying to propound remedies which are world-wide failures, and which not only do not touch, but are not intended to touch, the cause—because this would mean the abolition of the class to which they belong, would mean the abolition of the domination by which they rule. And so they go on propounding nostrums which have the desired effect of splitting the working class into sections on the political field, so that the masters may continue their exploitation.

Then my opponent seemed indignant because I asked is work such a good thing that we desire more of it. He asserted that the workers do desire work; in fact, he implied that that is all they want. Now if work is such a good thing for the men, obviously it must be a good thing for the masters, and I would ask: Why, then, do they allow the men to do it all and carefully abstain from doing any of it themselves? Why don't they engage in production? Why don't they go into the factory and the mine and work hard? Why don't they run the engines, man the ships, sweep the roads, stoke the furnaces, till the fields, and so on? To talk about my statement being a slander on the working class is to talk nonsense. My opponent fails to recognise the distinction between the necessity of having to work in order to live and the desirability of working under the present rotten conditions. As a matter of fact, we work,

and we should work, in order to live; we don't, or we should not, live in order to work. I trust he will understand the difference.

We are then told that we haven't learnt much of Socialism, but in the time at my disposal I dealt with the essential points. Surely if the working class, which has to manage and carry on production and distribution to-day in the interests of the masters, can do it so well for others, there is no difficulty in supposing they will be able to do it for themselves! Am I to understand that they are without the necessary intelligence?—that while they can do these things admirably for the capitalist, the moment they attempt to do them for themselves they will fail? The whole position of my opponent is absurd. It is an insult to the capacity of the class to which I belong; it is an assumption, totally at variance with the facts—that the masters alone possess the brains and the intelligence to organise industry, when, as a matter of fact which can be tested any day, they do not engage in production at all as a class, but merely act the part of parasites on the social lives of the people.

Then he states that if the fighting forces were abolished we should probably see some fun. I want to know why. What is the reason for the existence of those forces to-day? First and foremost they are used to keep the wage slave a slave, to crush him if he rebels—this is the essential reason. Secondly, they exist for the purpose of fighting out the quarrels amongst the capitalist class itself for the markets of the world. Now if these conditions are absent—and they most assuredly will be under Socialism—there will be no necessity for an armed force at all. There will be no reason for suppressing anybody, and with the elimination of the cause for oppression, there will follow of necessity the elimination of the armed forces hitherto kept for that purpose; and those who now form these forces will be able to engage in production for the benefit of the community. The fighting forces, in a word, exist only for the purpose of maintaining class domination, and when class domination ceases these forces will cease also.

His next statement was funny. The masters become rich by exercising thrift and parsimony! Where shall I find evidence of it? At Monte Carlo? Is it exercised when they pay £20,000 for a diamond necklace? when they give freak dinners costing enormous sums of money? When they lavish the costliest things on their animal pets? Do they exercise it with their garden parties, their expensive balls, or their lives of luxury, ease, and very often dissipation at their various health resorts, or when they pay £800 for a single voyage on the "Titanic"? Do they exercise it in their daily lives? If they come to business for a few hours in the week do they, when they go out to dinner, consider the cost and be content with a meagre lunch such as a glass of milk and a bun? Are the expensive restaurants of the City and the West End supported by the working class, or is it the wealthy who patronise these establishments? Thrift! Parsimony! Why, a man who makes a statement of this sort must do so with his tongue in his cheek.

The class who really exercise thrift—who have to, whether they like it or not—are the working class. You can see them exercising it everywhere, at the end of the week when the man and his wife have to devise means whereby the paltry wage they receive may last the week through; when the wife has to puzzle her brain to find out whether she can afford to pay the rent this week, meet the insurance, give the youngsters a bit of nourishing food and the old man something to buy his meals with while he is away at work. As you know from bitter experience, it is an everlasting struggle while you are in work, and if it happens, as it very often does happen, that you fall out of work, then the exercise of thrift is brought to the pitch of scientific perfection. The man and his wife have to think then, not how they can manage to live, but how they can manage to exist on the few shillings he may be able to scrape together

if he is lucky, and if he is unlucky and the unemployment extends week after week, then life becomes hell, and the scrapings of food bought with the wrecks of a home, the charity of those almost as poor as themselves, and the perpetual hunger of semi-starvation, give the lie direct to the infamous assertion that it is the working class who are extravagant and the masters who exercise the thrift.

Then my opponent asserts that no man made money except by saving. But I ask: What do you mean by “saving”? Is it the savings of the idle shareholder? If so, in what direction was he thrifty? What are the means by which he gets his dividends? Do the shareholders, say of the railways, who get a regular return on their investments—do they lay the rails, build the permanent way, construct the engines and the rolling stock, load or unload the goods trains? Do they do any of the work whatever by which their dividends are built up? You know they don't. As a matter of fact they know nothing whatever about the business except what they learn from the reports issued by the officials and the meetings held by the directors. These dividends are wrung from the sweated labour of thousands of shunters, guards, platelayers, and all the other employees of a great railway concern; and if it were not for the labour of those who really carry on the business, no dividends would be possible.

His next point is that the miners went on strike owing to the teachings of the agitators, by which I take it he means the men's officials. I am surprised that a statement of this sort should be made, because if he had only read the papers and followed the actions of these men prior to the strike, he would have known that the officials did everything they possibly could to prevent the strike; he would have known that they were complaining that it was the men who were driving them forward; and he would have known that official sanction was only given to the strike when the determination of the men showed that it was dangerous for the leaders to play the game of procrastination any longer. What about the three months' notice insisted upon by the leaders which permitted the industries of the country to a large extent to accumulate great stores of coal—the railways, the docks, the gas companies, etc., and so render the strike to a great extent harmless? What about the reduction of the men's demands, the forcible reduction by those very leaders whom you describe as agitators? And what about the ultimate betrayal by those leaders in the case of the ballot calling for a prolongation of the strike? If this is agitation, then the masters ought to be, and no doubt are, thankful that there exists that class of agitator.

As a matter of fact the strike was caused by the brutal conditions under which the men worked, by the utter impossibility of thousands of them being able to secure a bare living wage, and the reasonableness—the pitiable reasonableness—of the miners' demands was admitted by Mr. Asquith himself in the House of Commons, when he brought in his Minimum Wage Bill in pretence of satisfying their demands.

Borneo—I haven't time to deal with this, but it shows the elaborate ignorance of a capitalist, who hasn't yet learned that capitalism is separated by two distinct systems of society from barbarism.

Let me, in conclusion, recapitulate one or two of the leading points. You have to-day, production of goods in such huge quantities that the masters are choked with their own fat; when occasion arises crops of wheat, coffee, and cotton are deliberately destroyed to prevent prices going down. This I could prove by quotation. And along with these things, at the side of them, you have, beyond all dispute, in every country in the world where capitalism exists, among the vast mass of the people—those whose labour alone produces the wealth of the

world—destitution, slum life, child labour, sweating, insecurity, and a host of other evils; and if you examine, if you use your powers of observation, you will see that these things exist because of the ownership by a class of the means by which you live; you will see that these things must exist as long as class domination exists, and that the only remedy—a remedy based upon an investigation which goes down to the roots of the problem—is social ownership and control by the community of the things it produces. Then, but not till then, will society be able to free itself from the shackles that bind it, and men and women be able to lead a free, full, and noble life.

THE CHAIRMAN.

I will now call upon Mr. Samuels for his closing speech.

Mr. SAMUELS.

In my closing speech I do not think it is advisable or that any good purpose would be served by continuing the personal matter that cropped up as to the way in which I procured my wealth, so I will pass on to other matters. I congratulate Mr. Fitzgerald upon the energy he has put into his speeches and upon the brilliant and able way in which he has presented his case; but at the same time I cannot congratulate him upon his continued failure to answer my repeated questions as to how he is going to carry out his scheme of Socialism. He has stated that he promises you nothing at all, that Socialism will do nothing for you, that you have to do it all for yourselves, but at the same time the burden of the whole of his speeches has been: “Trust me”—(uproar)—“and leave the rest to chance.” That, I repeat, is what has been his contention, and I think that the majority of the people of this country will not be inclined to trust him or his system; will not be inclined to adopt a system of society of which even its advocates know so little. We all admit that the present system could be materially improved; we all know that in some respects it is very bad; but while this is so, I believe that all men and women who have the power of reflection, who have ideas of their own, will want (and rightly too) to know a very great deal more about the alleged benefits that they are going to derive under a vague scheme of which no details have been presented to us. And I further feel that the majority of the industrial workers of any country will want an answer to their questions as to exactly what the conditions are going to be when you have removed from the land the capitalist and those whom you declare live upon the robbery of the working classes; and they will want to know where their wages are to come from, how they are to be paid, and questions of a similar nature. I claim that we have a perfect right to demand answers to these extremely important questions; if you propound a remedy at all, then we insist upon knowing the details of that remedy. We are practical men, and as practical men we claim to be furnished with the required information before you can claim the support of anybody whatever.

The next point of my friend astonished me. It may be usual to talk in certain circles of grain and other produce being deliberately destroyed to men who never read a paper and do not intelligently follow the course of the markets of the world, and who will greedily swallow any statement you care to make, no matter how outrageous it may be. But I have never, in all my experience, heard of a single authentic case where commodities necessary for the well-being of men have been destroyed in the manner stated by Mr. Fitzgerald for the purpose of keeping up prices. The statement appears to me monstrous, and I should very much like chapter and verse for a single instance. I have been for over forty years in business in various parts of the world; during that time I have traded as merchant, been a shipowner and a banker,

and I have dealt in manufactured articles in every quarter of the globe, and this is the first time I have ever heard such a statement made, and, what is more, accepted so complacently by an intelligent audience. I am sorry to see the amount of gullibility which it implies, and I am not surprised to see that there are a certain number of Socialists about when men and women will swallow this kind of allegation. All I have to say is that if this is the kind of argument by which you hope to convert the working man to Socialism, then the capitalist, whom you have denounced, may look forward confidently for a number of years to a continuation of that domination which you say he possesses.

I do not now propose, ladies and gentlemen, to enter into any further arguments. I ask you to think the matter out for yourselves, and try and picture what would become of this country if Socialism ever came to be practised here. I would also ask you to think whether it is not possible that the evils which we all recognise, and which every right thinking man and woman must deplore— whether these evils cannot be remedied to a very great extent indeed by a system which is definite, a system which has the supreme merit of having been tried successfully in various parts of the world, a system whose results have proved eminently successful to the capitalist and to those who depend upon him for employment, and which has been adopted by every country in the world where they are really concerned for the prosperity of that country—the system known known as Tariff Reform, which I have had the honour to advocate and defend to-night. The merit of this system is that it is clear and tangible; it claims to be examined and accepted on its actual results, and if this be done with an honest intention, then I have no doubt that the evils of the day will find their remedy \m the adoption of a system of protective tariffs by which the prosperity of all classes in this country will be materially improved. On the other hand, what do you know of Socialism? Where has it been tried with anything approaching success? Why is it that its exponents are absolutely devoid of detail? Bearing the respective merits of the two systems in mind, I do not think that in the mind of any intelligent man there can be any doubt whatever as to which road leads to prosperity and success and which to failure and an increase of the ills rampant in our Free Trade country to-day. (Applause.)

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

