

*The Case for*

# **Common Ownership**

*Address to*

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by

**Professor A. C. Fox**

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## Christian Community Movement

MISS GLADYS HOLMES  
Secretary  
94 SHENTON ROAD - SWANBOURNE



*"Not by might, nor by power  
but by my spirit," saith the  
Lord of Hosts.*

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## The Case for "Common Ownership"

### The Church and Social Reform

As I have been invited to address a representative body of clergy on an important matter of material well-being, it might appear that the relevance of such well-being to Christianity can be taken for granted. Nevertheless, I cannot feel sure that all my hearers are of one mind on this matter, or that some of you may not doubt or even deny the propriety of the Christian body, as such, trying to make up its collective mind about social and economic reform. Hence I shall first of all make some remarks on this preliminary issue.

### The Material and the Spiritual

For the Christian body to be unconcerned about man's material condition means, by implication, that its sole concern is with his spirituality. If it is indifferent to how he fares in a physical way in this life, it must be because it is busy preparing his soul for another life. But behind this attitude there is an utterly untenable assumption, of the irrelevance of the material to the spiritual, of the body to the soul. Those who make this assumption may be challenged to show where the dividing line between the two is to be drawn, and if they can show this, they will have solved a problem which has baffled all the philosophers and the psychologists. To be sure, there is a real difference between the spiritual and the material, and it is equally undoubted, both that the spiritual should rule over the material, and that the Church's main concern is with spiritual living. Yes: but two further things are also undeniable. One is that the body and its material circumstances have a potent influence on the workings of a man's spirit. The other is that spirituality does not operate in a void, as if by bodiless ghosts, but shows its quality precisely in the way in which it elevates and transfigures the material. Christianity, with its doctrine of the Word made flesh, does not need to be taught this, though its devotees are often slow to learn the lesson.

But perhaps I should explain that by man's "spirituality" I mean his devotion to what is ultimately worthwhile, to the oft-named trio of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. But the full reality of all of these is in their concrete materialisation, in such wise as to make material conditions true, beautiful, and good. Unless they have this power and are given this application, they are just humbug; and unless material conditions are so transfigured, man remains in that degraded state from which it is the proper mission of Christianity to redeem him. It has pleased God to make a world in which there



is the material as well as the spiritual, and in which the two should go together in harmony. It should please us to acknowledge this divine ordination, and to give our full attention to restoring this harmony whenever it has been disrupted by human folly or wickedness or both. For this disruption is precisely what has come about, and its extent has now become so great as to alarm all sorts of people, because it clearly imperils the whole future of our race and jeopardises the cause of spirituality itself. Or are we to say that world-wide economic maladjustment and crises, with consequent global warfare, have no bearing on the fortunes of the spirit?

### **Folly as One Cause of Our Present Distress**

Notice carefully that I attribute our material woes to a mixture of two spiritual defects—folly and wickedness. I believe that downright wickedness has played a very large part, and that it is within the Church's office to denounce it with full vigour. But folly is also responsible, and often on the part of men of good will. Good will, however, is not of much effect without good sense, and good sense is much more than intelligence and shrewdness. The radical opposite of folly is not intelligence but wisdom, and wisdom is much more than cleverness. It is indeed a quality of the spirit, fit to be an attribute of God, whom we endow with wisdom but never with shrewdness. Wisdom is spiritual because, unlike intelligence, it looks to the ends and final values of living, whereas intelligence looks to the means and never evaluates ends. And so our present condition is in part due to lack of wisdom, to our failure to link up our daily enterprises with the great and worth-while aims of human living. In spite of our cleverness and our scientific skill, we have got ourselves into a mess, and we will never successfully get out of it unless we take long views, yes, and high views too.

### **The Christian Message about Wisdom**

It is here that the Church has a clear mission, in calling upon men, with all their intelligence and know- ingness, to be also wise; in pointing out that intelligence without wisdom may produce a world of clever devils; and in insisting that wisdom keep its eyes on the supreme spiritual interests which unite and never divide men. The corollary of un wisdom is shortsightedness and self-interest, and its ultimate outcome is conflict, misery, and death. There is no need for me to tell you, as clergymen, that the values which wisdom seeks have their final location in the mind and will of God, or that the Church must proclaim this ultimate truth day and night. But I may venture to remind you that if intelligence is blind

without wisdom, wisdom is empty without intelligence: in fact, in its true nature it actually entails intelligence. But this means that men will never be impressed as to God's wise intentions for them, unless we show how this wisdom works out in the intelligent ordering of their affairs. Far too much Christian preaching is ineffective because it fails to come to grips with men's actual problems and difficulties; and men quickly notice this and despise it accordingly.

### **The Unwise Are Not Always Rogues**

Because folly apart from wickedness is one of the roots of our troubles, we must be careful not to denounce the fool as if he were a villain. I say this as a reminder to those who lay about them as if all who have control over our present economic affairs were scoundrels without exception. Perhaps shortsightedness is a form of sin, but it is much more venial than unprincipled behaviour, which is what I include under wickedness. There is no doubt that wicked men in politics and business have had a hand in bringing us to our present pass, and when they add longsightedness to lack of principle, their perverted wisdom can do more damage than all the fools put together. But the Church, in its proper work of changing men's hearts, has less hope of them than it has of the unwise, and it is to these latter, who fortunately are in majority, that it may with hopefulness direct its attention. These are not the congenitally witless, but those persons of average intelligence who have mistaken false values for true. For these people the Church has the task of presenting the true values, and not in some other-worldly aloofness, but in their bearing on mundane social affairs.

### **Vilifying the Reformer**

There is another application of the warning against confusing the foolish with the wicked, directed this time not to the radicals in their attitude towards the conservatives, but rather the other way round. There is a too-ready tendency, on the part of those who stand by the established order, to regard reformers with downright malice, as if they were working for evil ends, and then to denounce them accordingly. But if the majority of conservatives are not rogues, it is just as true that the typical reformer is not a scoundrel. If it is not itself a piece of scoundrelism to call him so, and to insinuate that he is also a criminal, it is at least a device of weak logic, and a virtual confession that the reformer's case admits no answer but that of abuse. It is similar to the despicable Nazi trick of calling one's opponents communists, whether they are so or not. If you can get the public to give the reforming dog a bad name, the public



will soon be in a mood to hang him, to the utmost satisfaction of all boodlers and profiteers.

### **Shall We be Allowed to Make Reforms Democratically?**

I mention this here, not because I think my present audience would commit such an offence, but because I believe that Churchmen could, if they would, exercise no small influence in moderating this abominable practice. Not only is it unchristian, it is also undemocratic. It involves an important principle, as to whether those who wish to effect reforms by democratic methods are to be allowed to do so, or if they are to be frustrated by the Nazi trick already mentioned. There are many who want to bring about changes by popular consent, and to persuade the populace by statement and argument that such changes are necessary. This is the accepted democratic method. It ought to be met by counter-statement and argument and not by abuse, and especially not by false charges and innuendoes about the reformer's character and intentions. This is no defence of any who wish to disturb our affairs by undemocratic methods, however cleverly concealed. These persons should be exposed, though again in a reputable manner and not by means of lies and scurrility. Yet it is just a piece of unscrupulous logic to block all reform at the outset, because a minority of those who propose it are ready to be undemocratic. And those who oppose change bear a heavy responsibility if, despite their professed devotion to democracy, they are ready when driven to the wall to use undemocratic means to maintain the status quo; unhappily, the record of some of them in the past is not reassuring in this respect.

### **Wickedness as a Cause of Our Distress**

The mention of such people brings me back to the part played by wickedness in disrupting the harmony of social affairs. It is chiefly because wickedness has played this part that Christians must give attention to its removal. This is indeed a spiritual issue and a call to the Church's activity. And it gives one of the two main reasons—the negative one—why radical alteration of our social organisations is necessary. Change is needed because the present state of affairs is wrong to such a degree that it offends some of the basic principles of morality, and impedes that human fraternity which is one of Christianity's main objectives. Having such a character, the present state of affairs is wicked. Let no one think he can set this charge aside by pointing to many persons who uphold and benefit from the present order and who yet are not wicked. I know full well that this is so. But these people are good despite and not be-

cause of the system and their goodness could be much more effective under a better system. Moreover, we want a system in which it will be easier rather than harder for men to be good. It is a common remark that it is impossible to combine Christianity with success in business. We have to look to the system as a whole and to its general results, and there is no doubt whatever that it more readily facilitates dubious and even iniquitous practices than the expression of honesty and integrity. It too easily makes good men do things which they abominate, and then it lulls their consciences by sheer habitation. If the system requires amendment in the interest of the general good, we must not be deterred from the task because it includes and is even defended by some whom we respect. Judaism at the time of Christ contained many good and pious souls, but would anyone contend that for this reason Christianity should never have attempted to displace it?

### **The Evil Character of Our Present Economy**

The negative part of the case for social change lies in the evil character of our present relationships, and these are most obviously seen in economic relations, i.e., in the ways in which men have to do with one another in making a living. No doubt this economic maladjustment has its deeper roots in moral maladjustment, and this in turn is at bottom a spiritual problem. Of this I have already spoken, and to it I will return again. But the moral and spiritual aspects of economic wrong must be attacked directly in the economic realm itself, unless we think that these aspects can be rectified while the specific economic evils remain unaltered. As I for one do not think this—in fact I think it is pure nonsense—I am convinced that if Christians are to point to the way of betterment, they must cease from general moralising, and have courage to point out specific evils of an economic kind, and to indicate equally specific remedies. To do this most effectively, they should no doubt take advice from those in direct contact with economic affairs, whether as practitioners or as theorists. I have no doubt that they will get such advice if they show themselves in deadly earnest. But the Church will get no hearing if it speaks too vaguely; it may even evoke contempt through its appearing to sit on the fence, or to run with the hare while hunting with the hounds.

### **The General Indictment of "Capitalism"**

So much has been said of the evils of our economic set-up that I need not go into details. The indictment can be made out on two grounds, that of economics itself and that of morality. The economic charge is that "capitalism," or uncontrolled individualistic enterprise,



is self-stultifying and cannot deliver the goods. It is charged morally with being unjust and inhumane and with debasing the higher personal values through its materialistic motivation.

### **Capital is Necessary in Any Economy**

The economic weaknesses of "capitalism" should be known carefully both for what they are and for what they are not. To indict "capitalism" may be misleading if it suggests that there is something inherently wrong in the accumulation and application of large capital. But any economy which produces and delivers goods in a large way, i.e., any economy suited to the modern world, must gather and use capital on a great scale. Capital is simply the saving of sufficient resources to keep industry going and to allow for expansion. What is significant is by whom the capital is accumulated and directed, for they who do this exercise an enormous influence over the fortunes of their fellows. It is the contention of socialists that this influence is too great to be wielded by irresponsible individuals and corporations, and that there must be this irresponsibility where the control of capital is elsewhere than in the hands of the whole community in the form of common ownership. It is claimed that the evidence of this defect in capitalism is overwhelming, and that the gains from the use of capital are distributed most unfairly among those who help to make them.

### **"Capitalism" is Economic Confusion**

It is another accusation against "capitalism" that it sets too much store on capital accumulation at the expense of widely distributing the profits from its use, and for the purpose of creating more plants for the gaining of still more profits; that since this means that adequate purchasing power is not given to employees in wages, the whole arrangement becomes one-sided and collapses through its own unbalance, in periodical and worsening depressions. This accusation might be put in the familiar form, as exaggerating the profit motive; yet we should note that this also may be misleading, in suggesting that the profit motive is the peculiar vice of "capitalists." In truth, it is the vice which most of us have acquired from living under capitalism and we display it whenever we try to increase our personal share of the goods and services available. To work mainly for the wage or salary that one gets is to be as much a victim of the profit motive as any profiteer. But a good many people are forced to take an excessive interest in their wages, for the same reason as food is the most important thing in the world to a man who is famished. And even those who are well above the basic wage catch the same fever,

partly because they can never feel economically secure, and partly because the fever germs are in the very air that we all breathe.

### **Needed: A More Equitable Distribution of Rewards**

So one much needed reform is to loosen the tight bond between work and reward. One way to do this is by making the work itself largely its own reward, and correspondingly by minimising the kind of work which has no intrinsic interest. If inventive genius were freed from the restrictions imposed by vested interests of private ownership, many ways could be found of doing this. Again, far too many persons are forced at an early age into work for which they are not fitted and which leads nowhere; for them, the only possible interest attaching to work is the extrinsic one of its wage. I am convinced that a good deal of the so-called "laziness" and "lack of initiative" of workers may be traced to this source, nor is it unnatural that workers should ask themselves, under our present system, "Why should I slave to fill the pockets of shareholders?" Another way to alter the present connexion between work and reward is by a greater equality between the rewards of labour themselves. When the millionaire is the typically successful man of our age, and its hero, and when he is necessarily counterbalanced by the "wage-plugs" at the other end of the scale, whose attempts to better their conditions may be met by him—as they have been by Henry Ford—by hired thugs and machine guns—when these things are so, it is little wonder that the proletariat should be obsessed by the profit motive. They are certainly given a very powerful example of this motive by their economic superiors. It may not be possible or desirable to remove altogether the incentive of reward for work, but there is good hope that it will take its proper place amongst other less selfish incentives, and it should not be beyond the wit of man to devise these other incentives. The socialist claims that common ownership will supply a powerful altruistic motive.

### **Capitalism and Technical Advance**

Another respect in which private ownership defeats itself and impoverishes the world economically, is shown by its perplexity in knowing what to do with technological advance. It is common report that many useful inventions have been suppressed by interested parties because their development would interfere with those parties' gains. But the perplexity may not always be disreputable. There may be a genuine concern as to the results on workers' employment if labour-saving or material-saving devices are adopted. In an individualist or laissez faire economy there is no central control whereby



particular and temporary shocks can be absorbed by the whole organism. Common ownership with its planned economy would be in a position to provide these shock absorbers. But there is another perplexity about technical inventions. If the capitalist adopts them in order to lower his costs he either scraps his present invested capital or forces his competitors to scrap theirs, or perhaps both results happen. In any case the effect is waste, which entrepreneurs will shrink from bringing about. But if capitalists reject new inventions altogether, they considerably restrict the field of new investments for their capital, and the result, as Keynes has shown, is a deflationary pressure bringing about chronic unemployment of the factors of production. "The stability of the capitalist system is shaken by the alternation of attempts to stop economic progress in order to protect old investments, and by tremendous collapses when those attempts fail. The increasing instability of business conditions can only be remedied either by giving up the attempts to protect the value of old investments or by successfully stopping innovations." (Lange).

#### **Competition or Monopoly?**

Private ownership reveals its weakness whether it continues or ceases to be competitive. Its governing principle has been to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest. If, according to its original *laissez faire* idea, it remains competitive, it becomes "a war of all against all." And being unable easily to sell in a dear market because of competitors, it concentrates on buying cheaply, on reducing its costs, including the cost of wages to its employees. What this in turn costs society in terms of frustration, misery, and waste never comes into the entrepreneur's accounts, except when he is pleased to give some of his gains to the poor as charity, whereas what they really need is justice. But if capitalists cease to be competitive, and join forces in trusts, cartels, and monopolies, we are reminded of Adam Smith's remark that "people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment or diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public or in some contrivance to raise prices." Monopolists in trade are less concerned to reduce costs than to raise prices, although they are in a position to do both if they are so minded.

#### **From Monopoly to Common-Ownership**

I need hardly remind you that the marked tendency today is toward monopoly capitalism, but perhaps I may venture to say that this in some respects is a good tendency. It is better to have kindred enterprises under one direction than to subject them to the individualistic

struggle for existence. And the very strength of a monopoly makes for stability in industry, including security for those whom it employs. But please observe: these advantages are arguments for socialising such enterprises and putting them under common ownership. When monopoly remains under private ownership, its very strength becomes a social menace because of its irresponsibility. When it operates on a larger scale, as in imperialism, it becomes an international menace as well. It may even refuse to acknowledge the responsibility of patriotism, as recent revelations in America have shown: the private gain from holding on to patent rights is made to override the public gain from revealing these patents to the nation. Those who are quick to accuse the workers of disloyalty when they strike, should remember the even worse record of their masters. We have, for instance the spectacle of the British shipping industry denouncing post-war plans in favour of total concentration on the present job of winning the war, the while it insists on building ships as much for post-war trade and profits as for present war needs. Over against all this, common ownership offers the prospect of a sense of public responsibility, on the part of those who plan for the general welfare, and whose planning, while retaining the benefits of monopoly, will remove the disservice which it cannot fail to do through its profit-taking mentality.

#### **Why Not State Control of Monopolies?**

The advent of monopolies has made it impossible to revert to the former wasteful individualism, at least in industries that supply the community in a large way and which make use of mass-production methods. But some will ask why we should not retain these privately owned monopolies, in view of their admitted advantages, and submit them to public or State-control, rather than go on to common ownership. In this way, it may be thought, we will also retain the valuable element of individual incentive and efficiency, which will be endangered by collectivism. The answer to this is a double one. First, if incentive and efficiency depend on the individual capitalist's freedom to make his own way, this freedom has already disappeared under the very monopolies which our objector wishes to continue. Second, it is by no means clear that monopolies are forcing beds of individual initiative. "When competition is not in force, private enterprise is not compelled to introduce innovations . . . until the old capital is amortised." It is monopolies which have a bad record in suppressing the individual incentive of inventors.

#### **The Monopolies Would Control the State**

But there is an even more important objection to



retaining private monopolies under public control, in that the monopolies might easily come to control the State. This they might do severally or collectively. If severally, they would compete against one another for a lion's share of the allocations made under State planning, and the way would be open for organised political corruption; if collectively, they would be able in unity to dictate political and economic policy, and the planning which aimed to control them would be controlled by them.

### **Danger of Fascism**

Another peril would be a move toward Fascism. At present, if one industry resists the worker's demands, it can do so with the plea that it cannot increase costs, which are already high through what it has to pay other industries for its materials, transport, etc. When, under planning, this plea becomes groundless, and it becomes clear where the rake-off goes, the employers will be tempted to use the Fascist method to resist the workers. At any rate it is significant that Fascist countries unite State-control of private enterprise with severe regimentation of the workers.

### **State Control with State Monopoly**

It is clear that this mixture of private business with public direction will not work, and because of the private element in it and not the public. There is nothing wrong with the element of State planning, and as we are finding it necessary in war, so we must be prepared to face it in peace. It is the simple but essential idea of introducing order and responsibility into our economic affairs, in which now there is too much disorder and irresponsibility. "The reason men resort to public ownership," says an American writer (B. E. Lippincott), "is for the purpose of obtaining more responsible action. Toll roads, for example, were abolished because private management broke down. Government ownership and management of roads has led to greater freedom, and Government ownership and management of the postal service and electric power has hardly led to tyranny." Some people speak as though public ownership would be quite a novel experiment, with unknown problems and hazards. Some of its problems will indeed be new when it is applied generally, but then every advance brings its own problems, as when men went forward economically from feudalism to mercantilism, and thence to individualistic capitalism. But we are already familiar with some instances of public ownership in the way of various public services, and although these are not perfect, on the whole they give reasonable satisfaction.

### **A New Order and a New Spirit**

This has been said in anticipation of an objection that we already know public enterprise only too well, and may Heaven defend us from its general application! This objection is often accompanied by a sneer at the typical civil servant. I wonder if these people are aware that what is becoming typical in the public service is a new kind of civil servant, especially among the better trained members who would be the persons to have charge in a socialised order, i.e., under the supreme direction of Parliament. There is a new spirit in these men and women, a spirit of being trustees for common ownership.

But it is worth considering how the amount of truth in this objection arises; it is due to the fact that the public enterprises which we have are like islands in a large sea of private enterprise: that it is private enterprise which gives the atmosphere which all of us breathe: and that it is not therefore surprising if, e.g., workers in a Government workshop should behave towards the public employer in much the same way as other workers do towards private employers. Before we can judge what public enterprise can really do, we must change the general atmosphere; in other words, we must set our economic affairs on a totally new course with an entirely new motive. There must be common ownership of at least the major industries and services, giving those who work in them a sense that they have a real share and interest in the products of their labours. We must be perfectly clear that common ownership is not an attempt to beat the capitalists at their own game, adopting their old wisdom but using greater cleverness in its application. If this were all, it would be better to leave the old game to those who have become expert in it. No: common ownership is a proposal to play a new game with a new wisdom, even though it takes over some elements from capitalism. We must be prepared to learn as we go along, and to learn from our mistakes. But we can set out with the reasonable conviction that the new wisdom, the new objective, is intrinsically better than the old, and that its risks are worth taking, since the alternative risks are becoming too appalling to contemplate.

### **What Common Ownership Means**

I have not the space, nor have I the competence, to set out all the details of what common ownership means. On its purely economic side it has not the endorsement of all the experts, but it ought to be known that there is a substantial body of economic opinion in its favour, and convinced that it is perfectly possible as a working economy. In estimating the weight to be given to the adverse



economic opinion, we should remember that every proposed advance in human thought or practice has had opposition from the experts; the history of science is full of this kind of thing. In the present case, it is significant to notice a change that has taken place in the character of the opposition. Not long since, the common charge against socialism by economists was that it could not provide adequate incentives to individual efficiency. This charge has now been dropped in favour of another, viz., that failing the fixing of prices in a competitive market, especially for capital resources, it would be quite unable to carry out the necessary accounting processes, and hence would become chaotic. This challenge has been accepted by economists in the opposite camp, and they claim to have shown its hollowness.

Put in broad terms, common ownership means an economic organisation of society in which the material needs of production are owned by the whole community, and operated by organs representative of and responsible to the community, according to a general economic plan, all members of the community being entitled to benefit from the results of such planned production on the basis of approximately equal rights. The focus of this organisation is in the central planning, and this would be in the hands of an Economic Planning Commission charged with making major decisions—as to what and how much is to be produced, how, when and where it is to be produced, and to whom it is to be allocated, on the basis of a comprehensive survey of the economic system as a whole.

The broad merits of common ownership are in its claim to be free from both the negative and the positive accusations brought against private ownership. It escapes the negative charge, in setting the economic relations of men on a juster and more humane basis. It is immune from the positive charge—that private enterprise does not give the majority the benefit of their own labours but gives instead poverty amidst plenty—in that it removes glaring inequities of reward and holds in trust for all the plenty which nature and human ingenuity can produce. Its object is to upset the present subjection of politics and morals to economics, by making economics subordinate to politics, and politics subject to moral considerations. It contemplates an economy in which the designs of evil men will be more difficult to encompass, and in which good men will not be forced into practices which they abhor. It does not claim that it will at one stroke turn men into angels, or banish all wickedness and folly from the earth. But it does reasonably believe that it will enable men to be more human, and that is an advance upon present conditions and one that

is well worth making, even though it does not set up a utopia. These claims should have the especial sympathy of Christians.

More specifically, common ownership is designed to remove those defects of private ownership which have already been noticed, such as economic confusion and futility, obstruction of technical advance, inducement of so-called laziness, the use of economic power for sectional advantage, and the elimination or at least the minimising of trade depressions.

### Answers to Some Questions and Objections

The proposal of common ownership is sure to raise some questions and doubts. In the remainder of this paper I will mention a number of these, though my remarks on each must necessarily be brief. In this way also I may be able to throw further light on the proposal.

#### (1) "Will there be any private property at all? Will I be able to call anything my own?"

Of course you will. It is proposed to put under common ownership only those enterprises whose products and services are in general demand, such as transport, banking, power, coal, heavy metal, housing, medical and hospital services, and possibly the making of clothes and food. More restricted enterprises, and perhaps those on the land, could be left as at present. The ban on private property is made only so far as its possession creates power or privilege to the detriment of the majority of the people, or creates obstacles to economic progress. Personal possessions will, of course, be unaffected.

#### (2) "What will happen to the present owners of the industries which are taken over? Will they be robbed of their investments or will they be compensated?"

I myself am in favour of some such scheme as that propounded by Sir Richard Acland in his "Unser Kampf." The details will be found in that book, but broadly it provides compensation on a declining percentage scale as the amount of investment increases; and there is a somewhat reduced rate of compensation for those who want it continued to their children. This kind of provision ought to be included and be made widely known, both as a matter of fairness and as an important propaganda item. It has the defect of creating a number of idle rentiers, but it should be regarded as an inevitable price to be paid for a great gain. As for those engaged at present in active management of concerns, I see no reason why the most competent should not continue their present functions under common ownership, the remainder being assigned elsewhere or retired with pensions.



There will certainly be plenty for expert executives to do.

(3) **"Will all the important industries mentioned be socialised at once, or will this be a gradual process?"**

Opinion on this may differ, but my personal choice is to take them all over at once. To do otherwise would create both a disadvantage and a possible danger. The disadvantage would be for the concerns still on the waiting list, whose directors would have the worst of both orders, the old order and the new, for they would be in neither the one nor the other. They might be tempted to let their businesses fall into ruin. This doleful prophecy would be modified, of course, to the extent that these directors were believers in the new order, and eager to bring their concerns under it. On the other hand, the danger referred to would be that envisaged by Acland, that the enterprises first socialised might be sabotaged during the waiting interval by those next on the list. These persons, however, might be deterred from such a course if the change-over to common ownership were made by the expressed will of an overwhelming democratic majority.

This reference to democracy, however, suggests an argument in favour of a **gradual** change-over. To get the people's consent to a total change, it would be necessary to put before them the whole scheme of common ownership. It is likely that the majority would not be able to follow its ramifications, and would refuse to give their consent to what they cannot understand. This whole question requires careful consideration and debate, but uncertainty about it does not involve the general scheme itself in uncertainty.

(4) **"Can the necessary change of economy be made democratically, or will it require force?"**

Here I can express a hope and an opinion, in favour of the change being made democratically. And why not, seeing that it would mean simply an extension into the economic sphere of such democracy as we already have in the political sphere? Those who look upon it as a drastic revolution imply that economically we are not democrats now, and if they themselves claim to be democrats, they should support the proposed change. I can see no reason why there should not be an intensive and extensive campaign for a transition to common ownership, with the object of educating and persuading the majority into giving it their suffrages. This assumes something in the nature of a political party or parties with a common ownership policy and programme, and prepared if elected to carry out the necessary transition. It also

assumes that those who oppose the change would use only democratic methods and be prepared to abide by the democratic result.

(5) **"Should the Church form the political party necessary to bring in common ownership?"**

No: this is no part of the Church's business. But I believe that the Church ought to declare itself as in favour of the new order, and as supporting any party or parties that intend to work for it democratically. To this extent the Church ought to take part in politics. If the several churches or denominations find themselves divided on the issue, then let the progressives in all of them join together across their boundaries to form a committee or council for propaganda both within the denominations and in the community generally. Let them be willing to work together with any other bodies making in the same direction and by the same route. These various bodies might then form a Council of Progressive Societies, in which the several societies would retain their own tactics while following the one strategy to realise the one grand design.

(6) **"What Message should this body of Christians deliver?"**

They ought to have a general and a specific message. They should preach the general necessity of change towards common ownership, together with the broad details of what the change entails. But specifically they should add a note which is likely to be absent from, or not emphatic in, what other reformers have to say. This is the moral note, which sounds the spiritual requirements of the new order underlying and authenticating the changed external arrangements. Every social order has the two factors, the external and the internal. The community has a certain spirit and purpose, which means that it is set upon maintaining a certain way of life, and this is primarily the way in which its members live together and treat one another. But this spirit and purpose would be ineffective unless it took shape in the actual arrangements of the community's living, in its standing institutions and its laws, including those which refer to economic concerns. Each of these two factors requires the other, and they give each other mutual support. Hence the futility of the assertion that only a change of heart is required. There is needed also a corresponding change of the external order, for this reacts upon the "heart" in educating and disciplining it. So the Church's primary interest in the "heart" compels it to be interested in the rest of the organism.

Even so, the heart of man is the Christian's primary concern, and it happens that a change of heart, a new



spirit, is an essential condition of the new order we have been considering. So the part to be played by Christians is clear. They must be at pains to point out that common ownership asks for a new quality of living, a new spirit and purpose in the community. Especially does it ask for a greater fraternity and for a readiness to sink self-interest in favour of the general welfare. If the Churches were to offer their services to the new order in preaching this new spirit, they would be but performing their ancient spiritual ministrations. But they would perform them in a new way, and not with vague generalisations but with exhortations directed to the specific needs of common ownership. To do this, they would have to know something of the details as well as of the general idea. And they should be faithful in testifying that the new order will be neither new nor orderly unless it is informed with the new attitude, which in truth is nothing but the old Christian attitude. That we should have to call it new, after 2,000 years of Christianity, is a fearful reproach to Christians and to humanity as well. But it certainly would be novel compared with what prevails at present. So this distinctive note must at all costs be sounded, for common ownership attempted in the spirit of private ownership might well make our last state worse than our first. And the Christian message should be sounded forth in God's name, no less, and those who proclaim it should be bold to assert that God's will for man's good lies in this direction, and that those who face that way with pure intent may count on His grace and strength. For it is as a way of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven nearer to its realisation on earth, that Christians in the last resort are interested in this whole matter.

Nothing has been said hitherto in this paper about the wider outlook, beyond the nation to the international scene, and time forbids me to dwell on this. But it is clear that the same principles must govern both domains, if we are to get for ourselves and our children a world that is worth living in. It is equally clear that both domains must engage the earnest attention of Christians. In many ways, the solving of international problems will require more vision and courage, and more self denial, than the solution of questions arising within the several States. In any case, the two are closely interlocked.

This paper must now end, though I do not imagine that I have wholly or adequately covered the ground indicated by its subject. I shall be satisfied, however, if I have given a reasonably general idea of what is involved in common ownership, and have done something to commend it to your favourable reception, both as citizens and as churchmen.