SHAW'S ECONOMIC THEORIES

AS FOUND IN HIS PLAYS

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AS FOUND IN HIS PLAYS

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CHAPTER I

SUMMARY OF SHAW'S ECONOMIC IDEAS

George Bernard Shaw, by his own analysis, is not an ordinary playwright in general practice, but a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. He makes clear the purpose of this specialization in the following lines:

"My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. In particular I regard much current morality as to economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters." ¹

Though the reader may not be wholly converted to the dramatist's social or religious theories, he probably will reconsider accepted moral and social codes. This paper contains, somewhat in detail, Shaw's ideas of the economic relations of man, as they are stated in his political writings and upheld in his plays. To understand and appreciate his contribution to the economic thought of the last seventy years, the reader must repudiate what Shaw calls the soothing doctrine of Rousseau and Jefferson, that all men are created

¹Emma Goldman, The Social Significance of the Modern Drama, p. 175.
free and equal. Humanity, Shaw insists, is never free of the dangers of death by starvation, exposure, or warfare; and fear, created by these perils, compels man to work. When one person fails to do his share, he imposes on someone else who provides in whole or in part the shirker's necessities. Man's natural aversion to compulsory work causes him to seek to reduce the time he spends earning a living in order to enjoy some free time in the pursuit of pleasure. "This freedom," Shaw explains, "is called leisure, and it is, like labor, transferable." For this reason, he believes that people who do more than their share of work lose their leisure and become the political slaves of the non-workers.

Shaw is convinced that one of the major causes of economic inequalities in Britain is the three-class social system. During the infancy of the nation, men, banding themselves together for mutual protection, ruled that those who did not work should not eat. In this early civilization, man cultivated fertile land to provide for his needs; but after the population had increased, all the excess tillable land was appropriated. Thus was created, says Shaw, a landless class who could provide for themselves only by working for the proprietors. These landlords eventually

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2G. B. Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, p. 347.
monopolized the surplus wealth of the country, and by the power of that wealth, held exclusive control of education and aesthetic culture. This propertied class, seeing that their large estates would become worthless when subdivided into small parcels, instituted the law of primogeniture, leaving their property intact for eldest sons who became the peers of the realm. According to Shaw, this procedure established the three social classes of Britain: the lower class, composed of the landless serfs; the middle class, issuing from the younger sons of the aristocracy, possessing the culture and expensive tastes of their rich relatives—without their wealth; and the upper class, who inherited landed estates and social distinctions.

Since the middle class were neither inclined nor trained to do hard work, they put to use their education and culture to follow the professions or to enter into trade. From this group, Shaw explains, came the clergy, educators, medical men, scientists, military officials, and the rich merchant princes of modern industry. As this middle class acquired greater holdings, the lower class, or proletariat, greatly increasing in population, continued in illiteracy and poverty. The two upper classes, Shaw declares, combined against the proletariat, exploiting it of cheap labor and imposing upon it unfair commercial and political procedures. Without leisure, education, or
effective weapons, the unfortunate masses could not rid themselves of their oppressors.³

Shaw proves, conclusively I believe, that the class system has produced a great misdistribution of the national income. The British political systems, whether feudalism, absolute monarchy, or constitutional democracy, have contained a small per cent of plutocratic rulers controlling a large per cent of exploited poor people; and the source of this political power is private property with its saved money, or capital.⁴ By the eighteenth century the social evils of capitalism had become so complex as to attract the attention of outstanding leaders in the field of literature and journalism. After a rather serious but futile study of the economic system, these men, called utilitarians, deduced that the laissez-faire practice of capitalism was the best that was possible, that regardless of its many evils, it offered the greatest good to the largest number of people. The latter half of the nineteenth century, writes Shaw, produced men more concerned with the social injustices which had been multiplying in number and kind.

Both Shaw's political and dramatic works entitle him to be listed with the outstanding politico-economic scientists in contemporary history. Born to a propertyless

³Ibid., pp. 346-251.
⁴Ibid., p. 50.
upper-middle class Irish family, Shaw grew up in an ideal situation to understand the social problems of his time. From surreptitious visits, made with his nursemaid in the slum districts of Dublin, he gained an understanding of poverty which was to be of inestimable value in his work. Afterward, in London, the hub of the capitalistic world, the author was in contact with a cross section of British society.  

Shaw was concerned with many social problems, but poverty, he decided, was the most degrading influence endangering the welfare and morality of all the classes. Wealthy people were happy to consider poverty the just reward of the indigent. "The poor ye have with ye always," taught the clergy, and any attempt to abolish the class would be tempting providence. According to Shaw, Jesus should have explained that it was easy for the rich man— to be virtuous but very difficult for the poor since the trouble lay, not in the evils of the rich, but in the poverty-stricken condition of the masses. Alarming to Shaw was the high death rate of the lower class caused, no doubt, by unavoidable starvation, cold, and overwork. Marx's Das Capital, giving reports of horrible working conditions of women and small children in the factories and

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5 Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, pp. 346-351.
mills, opened Shaw's eyes to another evil, the monster called industry. Supplying the needs of the idle, gluttonous rich, industry was devoting her power to the production of luxury goods for which the plutocracy paid high prices. By such practice a scarcity in essential items was created which advanced the price which the poor must pay.  

With private enterprise in control of industry, production problems appeared. Division of labor helped destroy the initiative and invention of the working man, and to increase the unfair distribution of his labor and leisure. The time saved by modern machinery, according to Shaw, should be equally divided to set people free for higher thinking and the pursuit of pleasure—but that was not the case. Shaw describes the lower class industrial workers as follows:

They are ignorant and helpless, and cannot lift their finger to begin their day's work until it has all been arranged for them by their employers ...  

So long as the distribution of labor and leisure is unequal, any government is an instrument of corruption, regardless of the democratic principles of the members of such government. It is Shaw's conviction that all political programs, from the Sermon on the Mount to the Atlantic Charter, are completely futile unless the social structure is organized

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7Ibid., p. 162.
to secure "the best possible welfare for everybody through a just sharing of the burden of service and the benefit of leisure." This national dividend of material wealth must be considered from two viewpoints:

Production is the creation of use values, and consumption, or social income, is the pleasure which is derived by those involved in production plus the consumption of the use values created. 

Under prevailing labor conditions, Shaw observed that long hours of hard labor made any pleasure or pursuit of culture impossible. He reminds us that liberty and democracy mean nothing to the 90 per cent of the population who do virtually all the producing, permitting the remaining 10 per cent to live in leisure while consuming the lion's share of the goods.

Supposedly, the only goods produced under capitalism will have definite value for society en masse, and these goods will be produced without governmental force. The expectation of profits is the power upon which capitalistic production depends. Shaw doubts that the profit motive is the most efficient one. He says the greatest part of the world's work has been done by the great laboring classes who have realized no profit. Inspired by the fear of death

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8 Maurice Colbourne, The Real Bernard Shaw, p. 350.
10 Ibid., pp. 18-26.
from starvation or cold, by capitalistic landlords threatening dismissal from employment, or capitalistic military officials under a despotic government, the millions of laborers have had the giant's share of production. Shaw warned the public that privately owned capitalistic enterprises were leading the way to national disaster by dedicating industry to the production of luxury items, thus leaving the homeland to be fed and clothed on imported goods. Conscious of the power of a blockade in time of war, Shaw, by mouth and pen, fought for governmental control of capital and industry.\textsuperscript{11}

The remedy for all that was wrong with Shaw's world was a socialistic program. In 1882, after attending a lecture by Henry George on \textit{Progress and Poverty}, Shaw became aware of the importance of the economic basis of society. He began a serious study of Marx, and eight months later joined the Society of Fabian Socialists. Serving for twenty-seven years on the executive committee, with Webb, Bland, Wallas, and Oliver, Shaw helped formulate the doctrines of Fabian socialism, which are explained in detail in his major political writings: \textit{The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, The Fabian Essays,} and \textit{Everybody's Political What's What}.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12}Shaw, \textit{The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism}, pp. 43-46.
Shaw warns the student of socialism not to be misled by self-styled socialists promising any all-eat-no-work future, nor by "sham socialism," which is in reality a form of state capitalism. He explains further that there are many frames of government in existence, and still others possible. Two extreme types are the one in which some do all the work and have no leisure, and the other in which all share the labor and leisure. The former is represented as complete slavery; the latter, by complete socialism. Serfdom, feudalism, and capitalism are intermediate stages which illustrate the evolution of national group life. In regard to economics, seven types of social systems have been advocated, and most of them have been in practice at some time:

1. To each what he or she produces.
2. To each what he or she deserves.
3. To each what he or she can get and hold.
4. To the common people enough to keep them alive whilst they work all day and the rest to the gentry.
5. Division of society into classes, the distribution being equal or thereabouts within each class, but unequal as between the classes.
6. Let us go on as we are.
7. Socialism: an equal share to everybody.\textsuperscript{13}

The objections to the first plan are the impossibility of ascertaining the amount each person produces, even of material objects, and the fact that most people's work is the rendering of services. The difficulty with the second plan is that merit cannot be measured in money. Wealthy

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. xi.
people, believing that vice and laziness have caused the poor to suffer, approve of this system. Since some people are born rich and others poor, this is an impossible plan. The third plan, giving each what he can get or hold, places the old people, the invalids, and the small children in unfair competition with the able-bodied ones in the prime of life. The next system, an oligarchy, professing to some virtue in supplying an upper class with spare money or capital to provide a reservoir of funds for necessary public benefits, has been terribly abused by the gentry, leaders far removed from the lives of the common people. In spending enormous sums on sport, entertainment, gluttony, and ostentation, they divert the production of the laboring classes from necessary goods to the trappings of the rich. Parliamentary, military, religious, and vocational leadership which in the earlier feudalistic state was assumed by the nobility is now performed by boards of paid executives, by Civil Service, the war office, and similar bodies. As a consequence, all needs for a ruling class have disappeared. No longer must society make a few people rich in order to provide capital (saved money) for the construction of factories, mines, and other public works.

There should be no saving until there's been sufficient spending. Children's milk should come before steam engines.14

14Ibid., p. 37.
The fifth plan is wrong in its conception. Shaw emphatically states and logically proves that it does not cost some workers more to live than others, since "the same food that keeps a laborer in health will keep a king."\textsuperscript{15} Neither the king nor Mr. Rockefeller needs to spend a great deal more on such personal needs as food and clothes than does anyone else. The sea captain, village rector, the colonel of the army, or the Pope may be decidedly poor. Thus "money is not the secret of command."\textsuperscript{16} The rich maintain authority through the existence of a threat—dismissal from work, perhaps, or some other financial disaster.

Let us go on as we are! The policy of laissez-faire may continue so far as the average elector is concerned. People dread changes lest the old garment fit better than the new. Shaw says that a state changes whether we wish it to or not, that within the last 150 years astounding changes in the production and distribution of national income have already occurred. Steam, electricity, and modern inventions have provided for the feeding, clothing, and housing of the population in one-half the time formerly required. Lack of guidance and arrangement of the new order has left the poor worse off, since labor, in supplying services and products for the rich, is failing to manufacture

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 39. \textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
clothes and to preserve food. Revolutionary movements have followed the industrial changes; "the employers have overthrown the landed gentry; the financiers have overthrown the employers, and trade unions have half overthrown the financiers," and "we no longer speak of letting things alone, but of letting them slide."\(^{17}\) Business men and women approve of *laissez-faire*, which allows them to make as much money as is possible, without regard to public interest.

The final system, an equal share to everybody, is universally known as *Socialism*. To give a comprehensive analysis of this political science it would be necessary to go into detail, but in simple terms, socialism is, to Shaw, the management of the national income. Just as a housekeeper manages her budget, a government director should first decide which things are most needed, and which can be done without, in a pinch. To provide good management the government must provide "unconditional equality of income for everyone without regard to character, talent, age, or sex."\(^{18}\) Shaw does not deal in sentimental lamentations about the poor, but thinks all poverty should be abolished. Maurice Colbourne, in quoting Shaw, says, "Poverty should be neither pitied as an inevitable misfortune, nor tolerated


as a just retribution for misconduct but resolutely stamped out and prevented from recurring as a disease fatal to society. Colbourne believes that Shaw's greatest contribution to the study of economics is his conviction that money is the greatest factor in a social unit, the basis of all successful personal and national morality. The following lines express Shaw's deepest convictions:

The crying need of the nation is not for better morals, cheaper bread, temperance, liberty, culture, redemption of fallen sisters and erring brothers, nor the grace, love and fellowship of the Trinity, but simply for enough money. And the evil to be attacked is not sin, suffering, greed, priestcraft, kingcraft, demagogy, monopoly, ignorance, drink, war, pestilence, nor any other of the scapegoats which reformers sacrifice, but simply poverty.

Again, he says that socialism is "the equalization of income which involves the substitution of personal for private property and of publicly regulated contract for private contract, with police interference whenever equalization is threatened.\" Socialism will also require State regulation and control of industry and of the goods produced by industry. "If the flesh is not fed," warns Shaw, "the mind will perish"; thus food, clothing, housing, and fuel will become the first things in production. It is abominable that

19 Maurice Colbourne, The Real Bernard Shaw, p. 233.

20 Ibid., p. 235.

half-fed, poorly clothed, inadequately housed children are found in all quarters while money needed for their benefit is being spent on millions of bottles of perfume, pet dogs, racing cars, and other extravagances. In the following lines, Shaw states briefly the plan and purpose of Fabian Socialism.

This economy called Socialism, solves the problem of mass production and its possibilities of leisure, by State ownership of land, State control and practice of industry, and State allotment of the product between the consumption, capital, and investment. 22

Certain phases of Shaw's economic ideas are of great importance. I have attempted to separate the material supporting these ideas under five topic headings. They are as follows:

I. Summary of Shaw's Economic Ideas
II. Abolition of the Classes
III. Misdistribution of Wealth
IV. Problems of Labor and Leisure
V. Control of Production

The following quotation from the author was very encouraging:

In all my plays my economic studies have played as important a part as a knowledge of anatomy does in the works of Michelangelo. 23

The validity of this statement is borne out in Shaw's plays; the economic framework does give shape and support

22 Shaw, Everybody's Political what's What, p. 344.
23 Colbourne, op. cit., p. 295.
to his dramatic art, for, as Shaw believes, facts can be made instructive only through fiction. Economic equality is important in the lives of individuals and in the hope and welfare of nations.
CHAPTER II

THE ABOLITION OF THE CLASSES

When George Bernard Shaw became convinced that the best interests of the masses of the people lay in collective organization, he joined the Fabian Socialist Club, and became one of its most enthusiastic and valuable members. After working with the Fabians, he published books on socialism in which he explains its doctrines and methods of practice. Shaw explained that to put into effect socialist ideas, the British would have to break with many traditions, and not the least of these would be the class system. The socialists were sponsoring the plan of economic equality by which they meant to abolish the caste system.

In an historical summary, Shaw states that Britain is divided into three groups: the very rich, or aristocracy; the very poor, called the proletariat; and a middle class lying between the two extremes. Evil effects of this system, he believes, reach into the fields of education, industry, politics, and religion. The older aristocratic families had received their lands as gifts or awards for meritorious services from the crown; and as a
result, a ruling class, for centuries, deservedly held the high privilege of wealth and power. The growth of cities with large industrial plants increased the value of much of the land to the extent that the landlord class gained a monopoly of the nation's wealth.¹

Shaw accuses the upper class of bad leadership and offers proof of the superiority of the socialistic program of change. One of the deplorable social evils he calls parasitism, which is the class of idle rich. This group, he says, is produced by minority control of wealth which has reduced production to the extent that the unemployed have been urged to emigrate to other countries. Politely called Assisted Emigration, this movement would leave a parasitic state which the author describes as follows:

... the people of the country become a drawback to it, and have to be got rid of like vermin ... leaving nobody in it but capitalists and landlords and their attendants, living on imported food and manufactures in an elegant manner, and realizing the lady's and gentleman's dream of a country in which there is lavish consumption and no production, stately parks and palatial residences without factories or mines or smoke or slums or any unpleasantness that heaps of gratuitous money can prevent.²

This fool's paradise, Shaw warns, can exist, for such a condition has reduced powerful empires like Rome and Spain. Already the rich upper-middle class families have married

¹G. B. Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, pp. 9-23.

impoverished aristocrats, and the two classes, combining their interests, control capital, industry, and all the profitable professions, leaving little for the laboring millions who produce 90 per cent of the nation's needs. 3

In breaking down class barriers, Shaw hopes to rid the nation not only of parasitism with its snobbery and inefficiencies, but also of the class monopoly of comfort, education, culture, and the professions. This he proposes to do by equalizing the national wealth, beginning with the lowest wage group and raising their income to the next highest. This plan, which he calls "leveling upward," would be repeated until all classes are on a social and intermarriageable level. Shaw believes that the weaknesses and uselessness of the idle rich class have been caused by the politico-economic marriages which have for centuries made natural selection of mates impossible. 4

If the socialist dream comes true, society, though free from economic class distinctions, will be not a paradise of no labor, but a state in which man, with a moderate amount of work, a fair portion of leisure time, and an honorable social status can attain the best life possible for himself and his family. Shaw does not teach that there

3Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, pp. 9-23.

will be no differences in people, but that different types of persons will group themselves into clubs, sects, and cliques. There will still be an aristocracy—an aristocracy of merit and character. \(^5\)

In his dramatic works, the idle rich receive the greater part of Shaw's satirical treatment, for numerous plays portray their irresponsibility, immorality, and snobbery. One typical family of ancient standing and aristocratic habits, the Bridgenorths of *Getting Married*, indulge in the idleness and follies of their class. Alfred, Bishop of Chelsea, resides in a twelfth-century Norman castle with his wife, Alice, who, though she has already married off four daughters, cannot manage a wedding breakfast for the fifth. Boxer, the bishop's brother, is a man of natural simplicity and dignity, but he is "ignorant, stupid, faultless and dull and has been trained to be so."\(^6\) The head of the family is Reginald, whose property is managed by a solicitor, for excellent reasons. When Leo, Reginald's wife, decides to divorce him because he is mentally immature, a family friend tells her she should make allowances for Reginald, since he was brought up to be weak. Inheriting mortgaged property, he has been in


\(^6\)Shaw, *Getting Married*, p. 106.
constant money difficulties, hustled by solicitors, and bullied by his brothers. 7

The Bridgenorth family illustrate Shaw's theory of class monopoly of the professions. One son has been made a clergyman, regardless of his unsuitability for religious work; another has been given a commission in the army, even that of a general, though he is stupid and dull; the eldest, inheriting the property, lives in idleness while solicitors manage his estate.

Getting Married has one typical English snob in the character Hotchkiss. Spending all his time in society, making love to married women, he, too, is a perfect parasite. Hotchkiss believes that the whole strength of England lies in the fact that most of the people are snobs. According to him, the English insult poverty, despise vulgarity, and love nobility. They admire exclusiveness and will not honor a man risen from the ranks. Hotchkiss, while in the army, had refused to obey his commanding officer in order to prevent the promotion of a common soldier to an officer's rank. Though dishonorably discharged from the service for his lack of obedience, Hotchkiss considers himself a hero for upholding the class barriers in the army. 8

The oppression of the lower class by the rich aristocracy

7 Ibid.
8 Shaw, Getting Married, pp. 29–30.
is seen in an incident in *Arms and the Man*, which is a strong argument for leveling the social classes. Louka, a maidservant in the home of the Petkoff family, resents the attitude and manners of her mistress. Her sweetheart, another servant, admonishes her to be careful not to show her resentment. He says:

Be warned in time Louka: mend your manner. I know the mistress. She is so grand that she never dreams that any servant could dare be disrespectful to her; but if she once suspects that you are defying her, out you go.
Louka. I do defy her. I will defy her. What do I care for her?
Nicola. If you quarrel with the family, I can never marry you. It's the same as if you quarreled with me!
Louka. You take her part against me, do you?
Nicola (sedately). I shall always be dependent on the good will of the family. When I leave their service and start a shop in Sofia, their custom will be half my capital: their bad word would ruin me.9

Louka possesses an independent spirit, and despises the necessity for her obsequiousness. She tells Nicola that their wealthy employers are immoral and even threatens to reveal what she has seen of their improper conduct. Nicola, wiser than Louka, warns her that she will be discharged for telling stories. He says:

Who would believe any stories you told after that? Who would give you another situation? Who in this house would dare be seen speaking to you ever again? How long would your father be left on his little farm? Child: you don't know the power such high people have over the like of you and me

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9 Shaw, *Arms and the Man*, p. 145.
when we try to rise out of our poverty against them. Look at me, ten years in their service. Do you think I know no secrets? I know things about the mistress that she wouldn't have the master know for a thousand levas. I know things about him that she wouldn't let him hear the last of for six months if I blabbed them to her. . . . Well, you take my advice and be respect-ful; and make the mistress feel that no matter what you know or don't know, she can depend on you to hold your tongue and serve the family faithfully. That's what they like; and that's how you'll make most out of them.10

Nicola is quite aware of the immoral conduct of the Petkoffs—the infidelity of the husband and wife, their vindictive treatment of those who rise against their oppressors—but more appalling than anything else, the power to bring economic ruin by robbing one of his property for personal vengeance.

In *John Bull's Other Island*, English landlordism is held accountable for many sorrows. Larry, a native Irishman, says that he always thought it was stupid to allow the old landlords to control the land. They should have been held responsible for the condition of the land and the people on it. He explains his objections to the landlords in the following lines:

> I could see for myself that they thought of nothing but what they could get out of it to spend in England; and that they mortgaged and mortgaged until hardly one of them owned his own property or could have afforded to keep it up decently if he'd wanted to.11

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11*Shaw, John Bull's Other Island*, p. 560.
Then in discussing a peasant, who is very ill, Larry says:

Pah! What does it matter where an old and broken man spends his last days, or whether he has a million at the bank or only the workhouse dole? It's the young men, the able men, that matter. The real tragedy of Haffigan is the tragedy of his wasted youth, his stunted mind, his drudging over his clods and pigs until he has become a clod and a pig himself—until the soul within him has smouldered into nothing but a dull temper that hurts himself and all around him. I say let him die, and let us have no more of his like.12

Larry expresses Shaw's ideas in this play, for he recognizes the uselessness of the decadent aristocracy, and just as clearly, the undesirability of the pauper class. He apparently believes the Shavian doctrine, found in almost all the plays, that "poverty is the greatest crime."

The mad priest Keegan, in the same play, seems to give a comprehensive description of Shaw's Utopia. In speaking of heaven, he says:

In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three.13

Heaven, he believes, contains work and play for all the children of man who are but brothers. The divinity in man

12Ibid., p. 605.
13Ibid., p. 611.
must not be kept bogged down in the filth of poverty, but must claim justice and equality as divine privileges.

In advocating the abolition of classes, Shaw reminds his reading and theatre-going public that all men are children of one father, and that, as such, they should be equal socially. In *Candida*, the Christian Socialist clergyman, Reverend James Morell Morell, believes this doctrine and is trying to practice it in his work. When his secretary advises him to ignore an invitation to speak to a lower class organization, the Hoxton Freedom Group, Morell gives his reasons for accepting by saying, "Ah; but you see they are near relatives of mine... we have the same father."¹⁴ Froserpine, the secretary, does not consider the relationship of much importance. She, a member of the lower-middle class, shows more snobbery toward her inferiors than does the cultured Morell. Thus, in the social scale, snobbery and class distinctions exist among all the people; and the basis of one’s high regard for others is economic superiority.

In *On the Rocks*, written during the unemployment crises of 1933, a class war is threatening. A labor committee meets with the Prime Minister and his cabinet after a speech in which the Prime Minister has recommended government control of wealth and industry. Aloysia, a Labor leader, tells

the Duke of Domesday, a Conservative, that she considers him worse than the most degraded criminal in London.

Astonished, the duke asks her why she despises him so much. Her impassioned answer reveals the method by which many of the upper class families acquired their private property. With an accusing finger pointed at him, Aloysia says:

Do you forget how your family drove a whole countryside of honest hardworking Scotch crofters into the sea, and turned their little farms into deer forests because you could get more shooting rents out of them in that way? Do you forget that women in childbirth were carried out by your bailiffs to die by the roadside because they clung to their ancient homesteads and ignored your infamous notices to quit? Would it surprise you to learn that I am only one of thousands of young women who have read the hideous story of this monstrous orgy of housebreaking and murder, and sworn to ourselves that never, if we can help it, will it again be possible for one wicked rich man to say to a whole population "Get off the earth."15

Aloysia tells the Cabinet that this story of the Domesday Clearances was not recorded in the school histories, but it is now being written by the prophets of the new order. The Domesday Clearances, she tells the duke, filled his pockets with gold to console him for the horror and remorse of his dreams. She believes that now that Labor is coming to its own, the vengeance which the evicted crofters prayed for in vain will force the duke to get off the earth. The income tax, surtax, and estate duties, or death duties will soon relieve the landlord of his inheritance. Quite

conscientious, Domesday realizes there is a need for strong measures and capable rulers, but when the Prime Minister asks him to take the lead, he refuses. Shaw's criticism of the inefficiency of the upper class seems justified by the Duke's self-analysis. He says, in refusing the responsibility:

First, I'm not built that way. Second, I'm so accustomed as a duke to be treated with the utmost deference that I simply don't know how to assert myself and bully people. Third, I'm so horribly hard up for pocket money without knowing how to do without it that I've lost all my self-respect. This job needs a man with nothing to lose, plenty of hard driving courage, and a complete incapacity for seeing any side of a question but his own. A mere hereditary duke would be no use. 16

By the twentieth century, as this man testifies, the aristocracy have lost their monopoly of wealth and power; by means of organized labor, the proletariat are regaining their long deferred rights.

Sir Arthur, the Prime Minister, describes the attitude of the unemployed lower class with great understanding of their real trouble. A Cabinet Member wants to know how he proposes to secure nationalization of capital, rents, private property, compulsory labor, and other socialistic measures. Sir Arthur answers as follows:

They are sick of twaddle about liberty when they have no liberty. They are sick of idling and loafing about on doles when they are not drudging for wages.

16 Ibid., p. 323.
too beggarly to pay the rents of anything better than overcrowded one-room tenements. They are sick of me and sick of you and sick of the whole lot of us. They want to see something done that will give them decent employment. They want to eat and drink the wheat and coffee that the profiteers are burning because they can't sell it at a profit. They want to hang people who burn good food when people are going hungry. They can't set matters right themselves; so they want rulers who will discipline them and make them do it instead of making them do the other thing. 17

The Prime Minister believes that if the government does not find a way to solve the economic problems, there will be fighting in the streets. He does not approve of the Class War, but he does acknowledge that "half the working class is slaving to pile up riches, only to be smoked out like a hive of bees and plundered of everything but a bare living" by the upper class. Of the other half, the parasites, he says:

But what is the other half doing? Living on the plunder at second hand. Plundering the plunderers. As fast as we fill our pockets with rent and interest and profits they've emptied again by West End tradesmen and hotel keepers, fashionable doctors and lawyers and parsungs and fiddlers and portrait painters and all sorts, to say nothing of huntsmen and stablemen and gardeners, valets and gamekeepers and jockeys, butlers and housekeepers and ladies' maids and scullery maids and deuce knows who not. 18

These parasites, the Prime Minister realizes, will fight for property, though they own none themselves. In On the Rocks, Shaw goes beyond any previous argument for class abolition; his Prime Minister admits that to get the Ship of State off the financial and political rocks, it may be

17Ibid., p. 318. 18Ibid.
necessary to resort to extermination. He says that "a rope round a statesman's neck is the only constitutional safeguard that really safeguards."\textsuperscript{19}

Aloysia, a representative of the proletariat, becomes engaged to marry the Prime Minister's son, thus uniting the upper and lower classes. Shaw's belief that the only class distinction is money is upheld by the incident. This is also a case of natural selection of mates, which the author believes is necessary to breed a stronger race. The following conversation between Sir Arthur and Aloysia explains the situation:

Aloysia. Well, the moment I laid eyes on David I went all over like that. You can't deny that he is a nice boy in spite of his awful language. So I said--
Sir Arthur. "David's the man for me"?
Aloysia. No. I said "Evolution is telling me to marry this youth." That feeling is the only guide I have to the evolutionary appetite.
Sir Arthur. The what??
Aloysia. The evolutionary appetite. The thing that wants to develop the race. If I marry David we shall develop the race. And that's the great thing in marriage, isn't it?\textsuperscript{20}

When Sir Arthur tells his wife, Chavender, that Aloysia wants to marry their son, she gives her approval, because Aloysia, the working girl, seems "to have all the qualities in which David is deficient." Aloysia is resolute and successful; David is irresolute and unsuccessful. In analysing her son's weaknesses, she also describes the condition of

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 313. \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 334.
the upper class which Shaw believes should be supplanted by a better breed. Lady Chavender says:

David is overbred: he is so fine-drawn that he is good for nothing; and he is not strong enough physically. Our breed needs to be crossed with the gutter or the soil once in every three or four generations.21

Her husband tells Lady Chavender that she is the only real revolutionary he has ever met. Her response explains the reason for her attitude:

Oh, lots of us are like that. We were born into good society; and we are through with it; we have no illusions about it, even if we are fit for nothing better.22

She adds that she will probably enjoy Aloysia's being in the family. Thus the two classes, in fiction at least, become one to produce a better race. Whether or not a complete change will be effected by revolutionary or by peaceful means, On the Rocks does not decide. However, it shows that modern Britain will not always endure the economic inequalities which have resulted from minority control of wealth and an ineffective government.

Shaw's The Apple Cart, a play which analyzes the condition of the government during the aftermath of World War I, like On the Rocks, shows the aristocracy to be indifferent to the welfare of the whole nation. Speaking in the "Preface" to The Apple Cart, the author explains that he believes in a form of society which gives all its

21Ibid., p. 339.  
22Ibid.
members equal consideration. For that reason he insists on equality of income. However, he does not believe that government by the people is possible; every citizen cannot be a ruler. The only solution is a government by the consent of the governed, the consent being that of the entire nation and not of a minority class of plutocrats. Referring to the British plan, Shaw asserts that "if we resort to a committee or parliament of superior persons, they will set up an oligarchy and abuse their power for their own benefit."23

Magnus, the English king in The Apple Cart, condemns the upper class in their role of leadership. He says,

There was a time when the king could depend on the support of the aristocracy and the cultivated bourgeoisie. Today there is not a single aristocrat left in politics, not a single member of the professions, not a single leading personage in big business or finance. They are richer than ever, more powerful than ever, more able and better educated than ever. But not one of them will touch this drudgery of government . . . 24

Thus Shaw attempts to justify his fight for abolition of the three class system. The aristocracy, the professional people, and the bourgeoisie, he says, have deserted their posts in the pursuit of money. King Magnus does not want the old governing class back, for "it governed so selfishly that the people would have perished if democracy had not

24 Ibid., p. 233.
swept it out of politics." But with all its faults, the old system "stood above the tyranny of popular ignorance and poverty."\(^{25}\)

Thus feudalism, monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy have had their day. Socialism, with one intermarriageable class, is the next experiment in the evolution of organized society.

\(^{25}\text{Ibid.}, \text{ pp. 234-235.}\)
CHAPTER III

MISDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

It is Shaw's purpose to inform people of the facts concerning the unequal distribution of the nation's wealth, and to teach them to reason for themselves. To attempt, within this limited paper, to make a complete study of his theories of wealth would be to attempt the impossible, for he has written extensively on the subject. I have traced, in his plays, the general theme of the evils of capitalistic system and the socialistic theory of redistribution of private property. Shaw considers the minority control of wealth to be the source of most political atrocities which have occurred in many lands. The fault he finds with British landlordism is perpetual inheritance, for primogeniture, supposed to be abolished in 1925, has not gone out of practice.¹ By the nineteenth century, according to Shaw, British private property had effected so outrageous a misdistribution of national income that it was attracting international attention. In the following lines he mentions an outstanding social condition:

Babies were millionaires, and workers worn out by a lifetime of toil were paupers. Lapdogs were

¹G. B. Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, pp. 2-4.
overfed on mutton cutlets and warmed on drawingroom hearthrugs whilst children were being stunted and famished for want of sufficient food and fuel.2

When the government attempted to help provide better housing, clothing, meals, and education, the labor needed for their production was being devoted to luxury articles and other "unnecessary rubbish."

This misuse of industry, the author explains, was caused by the landlord class, possessing a monopoly of saved money, or capital. By lending their capital to business men in exchange for interest, this group soon acquired a monopoly of national industry. Such a system, Shaw reminds us, has provoked political uprisings in other countries, and may do so again in Britain. He cites as examples the French Revolution, the extermination of the landlord class by the Ribbon Lodges of Ireland, and the more recent and vastly more effective revolt of Soviet Russia, in 1917, which totally abolished private ownership of land. A proposed land tax, Shaw believes, would be an inadequate measure of equalization, since it would, by leaving capital untouched, merely starve the landlord to fatten the banker.

In regard to private property, or inherited estates, Shaw agrees with the Frenchman Proudhon's theory found in the essay "What is Property? It is Theft," that "the landlord and capitalist, in as much as they consume without producing,

2Ibid., p. 100.
inflict precisely the same injury on the community as a
thief does." Shaw also agrees with Marx's theory that
"capital in pursuit of unearned income is utterly insa-
tiable and utterly unscrupulous." Yet he cautions that
as individuals, capitalists are not evil persons. He says:

It is not true that all the atrocities of
Capitalism are the expression of vice and evil
will. Many amiable and public-spirited men uphold the system of
minority control, thus doing evil with good intentions.

In Shaw's prefaces and plays, two factors exist in
situations involving the operations of capitalism: insa-
tiable leaders and unscrupulous business methods. Small
people and small businesses bear the brunt of the unequal
division of the national dividend, for capitalism is born
of cheap labor and nourished on inhumane business practices.

Practically all of Shaw's plays contain either an
aristocratic nineteenth century landlord or a twentieth
century captain of industry whose wealth has originated
from private property. Sartorius, of *Widowers' Houses*,
is a slum landlord who lets his houses from week to week
by the room, half-room, or quarter room. His rent collec-
tor, Lickcheese, observes that Sartorius likes a location
with a low death rate and gravel soil; but in Robbin's Row,
the renters have something different. Sartorius's business

3Ibid., p. 16. 4Ibid., p. 2.
ethics are seen in the incident in which he discharges Lickcheese for spending four and twenty shillings to mend a stairway on which three women have been hurt. Lickcheese, who has four small children, offers to pay the bill to keep his job, but Sartorius is unrelenting. Lickcheese pleads with Sartorius's guests to speak in his behalf, telling them he has "screwed and worried and bullied" the rent money from people whose small children were crying for the bread it would have bought. When the guests criticize him for taking such money, he says:

Do you suppose he sacked me because I was too hard? Not a bit of it: it was because I wasn't hard enough. I never heard him say he was satisfied yet—no, nor he wouldn't not if I skinned 'em alive.5

By his employee's judgment, Sartorius is greedy and unscrupulous. Of this play, Shaw says:

In Widowers' Houses, I have shewn middle class respectability and younger son gentility fattening on the poverty of the slums as flies fatten on filth.6

Sir George Crofts, of Mrs. Warren's Profession, together with his friend the Archbishop and a brother who is a Member of Parliament, is a typical landlord. Sir George, whose investments are private hotels depending for profit on prostitution, defends himself when he is called a scoundrel. In the following lines, he incriminates others of his class:

5Shaw, Widowers' Houses, p. 34.

6Ibid., "Preface," p. 16.
Why the devil shouldn't I invest my money that way? I take the interest on my capital like other people: I hope you don't think I dirty my hands with the work. Come! you wouldn't refuse the acquaintance of my mother's cousin the Duke of Belgravia because some of the rents he gets are earned in queer ways. You wouldn't cut the Archbishop of Canterbury, I suppose, because the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have a few publicans and sinners among their tenants.7

According to Shaw, the system, not the individual, is evil. Sir George boasts of family breeding that makes him hate anything low. It is just that he must conform with society as it is, and to do so, money is required.

Millionaire Undershaft, of Major Barbara, arms manufacturer, is one whose influence is unmeasurable. His daughter Barbara believes the distillery magnate, Bodger, and her father control the wealth of London. In the following speech, she voices her disapproval of their philanthropy:

Undershaft and Bodger: their hands stretch everywhere: when we feed a starving fellow creature, it is with their bread, because there is no other bread; when we tend the sick, it is in the hospitals they endow; if we turn from the churches they build, we must kneel on the stones of the streets they pave. . . . Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our backs on life.8

By donating large sums to charity capitalism soothes the pains of poverty and helps to maintain a cheap labor class necessary for its own existence. Lady Britomart Undershaft explains to her son Stephen that two men, her husband,

7Shaw, Mrs. Warren's Profession, p. 82.
8Shaw, Major Barbara, p. 443.
Andrew Undershaft, and his partner Lazarus positively have Europe under their thumbs. Their power is not just in the production and sale of cannon, she says, but in the war loans that Lazarus arranges under cover of giving credit for cannon. This situation has put them so far above the law that even the government and the press are afraid to interfere. In speaking of his son's career, Undershaft says,

He knows nothing and thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career.  

Resentful of the remark, Stephen refuses to listen to Undershaft insult the government. His capitalist father addresses him as follows:

I am the government of your country. I, and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft and Lazarus? No, my friend: you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesn't. You will find that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need.

Stephen, like the typical Englishman, denies his father's power and still believes his country is governed by the best elements of English national character. Thus Major Barbara introduces the idea that men few in number control the nation's wealth and hold over its people the power to create war.

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9Ibid., p. 416.  
10Shaw, Major Barbara, p. 416.
In *The Millionairess*, Epifania sets out to earn a certain amount of money. By ruthless methods she acquires a mortgaged coffee shop which has been in operation since the time of William the Conqueror. The manager describes some of Epifania's experiences in converting the place to a profitable, modern lounge. Then, regardless of the condition of the poor old employees, she turns them into the street where they wander about before going to the workhouse. Later she boasts of making enough money in one week to support herself, according to the working woman's standards, for one hundred years. The doctor, who has challenged the millionairess, Epifania, to earn her living, says:

Had you added a farthing an hour to the wages of those sweated women, that business would have crashed on your head. You sold it to the man Superflew for the last penny of his savings; and the women still slave for him at one piastre an hour.  

The doctor questions the morality of displacing the old workers. He inquires:

But what of the old people whose natural home this place had become? the old man with his paralytic stroke? the old woman gone mad? the cast out creatures in the workhouse? Was not this praying on the poverty of the poor?  

Epifania's only excuse for her unscrupulous business practices is that she must take the world as she finds it.

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12 Ibid., p. 195.
Thus, like other capitalists, she assumes no personal responsibility for the casualties of trade.

In Heartbreak House, Boss Mangan, a "Napoleon of industry," has become engaged to Ellie Dunn, daughter of his manager, Mazzini Dunn. In confiding with a friend, she describes her father's business relations with Mangan. Mazzini was a poor but intelligent person who thought he could succeed if only he had some capital. Out of pure friendship for Dunn, Mangan made him a present of enough money to start his business. It is strange to Ellie that before getting this money, they had kept out of debt, but after launching into business, her father had to incur liabilities which brought on bankruptcy. He was broken-hearted, for he had persuaded several old friends to invest their money in the business. Very kindly, Mangan bought what was left of the buildings and equipment, paying enough for Mazzini to repay his friends six and eight pence on the pound. Ellie's friend, Mrs. Hushabye, assumes that the business failed because Mazzini had no head for it; therefore, she is surprised to learn that the business became a success after Mangan started a company to revive it. Her father was retained as manager, she supposes, to keep them from starvation.

Afterward, Mangan confesses to Ellie that he ruined her father purposely; not maliciously, just as a matter of
business. Ellie has been of the opinion that Mangan lost his own money along with her father, but he explains that he does not start new businesses, but lets other men put all their money into them. After these men have worn themselves out, trying to make the business succeed, they invariably have either to give up or sell to someone for a few deferred shares. The new company, Mangan says, after adding more money and hard work, probably sells to a third group. At this stage, if it is a really big thing, the third lot will have to sell, leaving their work and money behind. By this time Mangan is interested. He explains in the following lines:

And that's where the real business man comes in: where I come in. But I'm cleverer than some. I don't mind dropping a little money to start the process.\textsuperscript{13}

In such a manner, Mangan says, he acquired Mazzini's business. He says:

Your father and the friends that ventured their money with him were no more to me than a heap of squeezed lemons.\textsuperscript{14}

The small business man, Mazzini, bears the financier no ill will. He is convinced that Boss Mangan is necessary for the success of the business. He and his helpers are too sentimental and impractical to keep it on a profit-bearing basis. "The boss will sit up all night," he says, "thinking of how

\textsuperscript{13}Shaw, \textit{Heartbreak House}, p. 533.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 534.
to save six pence." Like most captains of industry, Mangan knows nothing about the operation of the business. Other men's brains take care of that.

*Man and Superman* contains an organization of brigands, Mendoza Limited, which operates in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of Spain. Their business is to rob motorists in order to secure a more equitable distribution of wealth. To do the work of Mendoza Limited they must risk their lives and liberties. Mendoza, the captain of the band, tells Tanner, an English tourist and victim of the brigands, that once he was a waiter at the Savoy, living an honorable life. After being disappointed in love, he went to America. There he fell in with a train robber who gave him the idea for holding up motor cars and introduced him to some capitalists. Then he formed a syndicate; Mendoza Limited is the result. In the same play, Hector Malone, American millionaire, is disturbed because his son wants to marry an untitled English girl. He is ready to buy Hector Junior an historic house, castle, or abbey but the boy must select a wife worthy of its traditions. The boy's sweetheart finally overcomes his prejudice and marries young Hector.

Malone's business in Spain is to investigate a company for which he now owns the shares. He has bought them not knowing whether the company is a mine, a steamboat line, a bank, or a patent article, only to learn that he has financed the brigand band, Mendoza Limited. Granted that the company
is of questionable morals, the outlaws do, as Shaw terms it, furnish labor and production. They risk imprisonment, if captured, and possible death from an irate tourist. Mendoza, the manager, has made some money, but the capitalist, Malone, who has done no work, receives the largest share of the gains.

*John Bull's Other Island* was written before Irish Home Rule, and is said to be a picture of capitalism in action. An English investor, Broadbent, when questioned about establishing hotels in Ireland, answers as follows:

*Where else can I go? I am an Englishman and a Liberal; there is no country left to me to take an interest in but Ireland.*[^15]

When he arrives, he learns, among other things, about landlordism. Larry, an Irish boy, tells the story of Matthew Haffigan and his brother Andy who made a farm on a rocky hillside, cleared it and dug it with their naked hands, and bought their first spade out of their first crop of potatoes. They next raised a crop of wheat on ground which had never grown anything before. Broadbent believes it took a great race to produce such men. Larry says:

*Such fools, you mean! What good was it to them? The moment they'd done it, the landlord put a rent of five pounds a year on them, and turned them out because they couldn't pay it.*[^16]

The renter who followed the Haffigans, he says, could not

pay the rent either. The Englishman says he would have shot the landlord, wrung the neck of the agent, and blown the farm up with dynamite. Larry's comment is as follows:

That's an Englishman all over! make bad laws and give away all the land, and then when your economic incompetence produces its natural and inevitable results, get virtuously indignant and kill the people that carry out your laws.¹⁷

The philosopher Keegan sums up Broadbent's achievements as follows:

The conquering Englishman, sir. Within 24 hours of your arrival you have carried off our only heiress, and practically secured the parliamentary seat. And you have promised me that when I come here to meditate on my madness; to watch the shadow of the Round Tower lengthening in the sunset. . . . you will comfort me with the bustle of a great hotel, and the sight of little children carrying the golf clubs of your tourists as a preparation of the life to come.²⁸

Later, when the philosopher discusses Broadbent's business venture, he rehearses the part the capitalists are about to play. He admits they may build the hotel; and when it becomes insolvent, they will secure the thorough efficiency of the liquidation. Broadbent, Keegan continues, will re-organize the scheme, liquidate its second bankruptcy, get rid of its original shareholders efficiently, after efficiently ruining them, and then buy the hotel for a few shillings on the pound. Then, he says, they will drive the small farmers to America, employ cheap labor, establish a

¹⁷Ibid.
¹⁸Ibid., p. 602.
polytechnic school, distilleries, slot machines, and refreshment booths. Then, he concludes:

... English and American shareholders will spend all the money we make for them ... in shooting and hunting, in operations for cancer and appendicitis, in gluttony and gambling. And you will devote what they save in fresh land development schemes.¹⁹

Keegan's irony is lost on the materialistic Broadbent, who walks away to pick the site for the hotel.

In 1933 Shaw wrote On the Rocks, a play of the great depression, in which, after a long siege of unemployment, the masses are threatening revolution. The Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Chavender, with the Cabinet, meets in consultation with a Labor deputation. The Prime Minister tells the committee that he has done everything possible for the unemployed, making great sacrifices. Viscount Barking, an avowed Red, asks:

What sacrifices? Are you starving? Have you pawned your overcoat? Are you sleeping ten in a room?²⁰

Sir Arthur reprimands the young man for his impertinence. The Labor Deputation assert that they want action, not fine speeches. Sir Arthur tells them that if the masses resort to mob violence, it will result in imprisonment for some of them, that no real good can come of it. Major Hipney declares that if the government cannot find work, the meeting

¹⁹Ibid., p. 608.
is a waste of time. The only encouragement Sir Arthur has to offer is a report from a trade journal, quoting Spanish onions up to the 1913 level.

In private conference with old Labor leader Hipney, the Prime Minister acknowledges that starving people will revolt. Hipney believes the government should make changes in its economic policies. Of the people, he says:

All they wanted was to be given their job, and fed and made comfortable according to their notion of comfort. 21

He tells Sir Arthur that if he had provided them with a job, and other necessities, they would not be up in arms now, but Sir Arthur was not equal to it and "now the fat's in the fire." He defends his government on the grounds that it cannot compel traders to buy unmarketable goods nor force manufacturers to produce articles traders will not buy. "Without demand there can be no supply," he concludes. Hipney replies that there is a demand now, a powerful one—in their children's bellies and in their own. The Prime Minister, condescendingly, explains that the hunger of the unemployed is not effective demand. Hipney interrupts by saying:

No use, Sir Arthur. That game is up. That stuff you learnt at college, that gave you such confidence in yourself, won't go down with my lot. 22

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21 Ibid., p. 264. 22 Ibid., p. 265.
Old Hipney means that the cure for unemployment is work, not quibbling; hence the government incapable of protecting the whole people must give way to something with power and authority to make right what is wrong.

After the Prime Minister reads Karl Marx's publications, he is convinced that the present pseudo-democracy must give way to socialism. Sir Arthur, following the program of redistribution which Shaw has advocated previously in his political writings, makes an address to a mass meeting, committing the government to Nationalization of ground rents, Nationalization of banks, Nationalization of collieries, Nationalization of transport, abolition of tariffs, and prohibition of private foreign trade in protected industries, compulsory public service for all, restoration of agriculture, collective farming, Nationalization of fertilizer industries, and ruthless extinction of parasitism. With nitrogen from the air and power from the tides, Britain will be self-supporting and blockade proof. To help finance the present crisis, the surtax on unearned incomes will be doubled.

The personal reaction of several officials introduces the industrial and financial problems confronting these men as representatives of large social groups. Sir Dexter Rightside, leader of the Conservative Party, calls Sir Arthur a "Bolsky Premier," a mercenary gangster, and a
damned fool. Sir Bemrose Hotspot, First Lord of the Admiralty, when promised better pay and income exemption for naval personnel, promises his support.

Police Superintendent Basham is made happy with the promise to restore reductions of pay to the Police Department. Glenmorison, representing small businesses, accepts Sir Arthur's program because the balance of his constituency are tradesmen and shopkeepers who need government banking aid. However, such small businessmen who need the loan of a few thousands do not interest financiers thinking in terms of millions. Glenmorison says a man can borrow a quarter of a million more easily than a few thousands. Sir Dexter says the banks will give them overdrafts if their credit is good, but Glenmorison explains that with a slump or panic on the Stock Exchange, the banks call in the loans. The Scotsman indorses the Prime Minister's proposal of panic-proof national and municipal banks. His own position will be secure, which, to him, is no minor matter. He says his people are a canny lot and would vote for the devil if he would promise to abolish the rates and open a municipal bank.

From Sir Jafna, financier, we hear the opinions of the capitalists. Sir Dexter addresses him as follows:

You are welcome, Sir Jafna: most welcome. You represent money; and money brings fools to their senses."
Sir Jafna insists that, on the contrary, he is but a poor man who never knows whether he is worth thirteen millions or only three. The land monopolists, who are blackmailers and robber barons, are ruining him. The Blayport Docks reconstruction scheme, which will be a great public benefit, is being hampered by the landowners who are demanding enormous prices for indemnity. They are ready to get 60 per cent of his profits without lifting a finger. He says that he works, plans, and shatters his health just to make these parasites rich. He heartily endorses nationalization of the land which, he believes, will stop the exploitation of the financiers by the "useless, idle, and predatory landed class."

Sir Jafna promises Sir Arthur the support of his group, as he complains:

> These pirates think nothing of extorting a million an acre for land in the city. A man cannot have an address in London for his letters until he has agreed to pay them from five hundred to a thousand a year. He can't even die without paying them for a grave to lie in. Make them disgorge, Arthur. Skin them alive. Tax them twenty shillings in the pound. Make them earn their own living.²⁴

Conservatist Sir Dexter inquires whether the abolition of the incomes of the landed gentry will not also be the destruction of the source of capital. Sir Jafna, the financier, denies this to be the case. Of capital, he says:

> I will find it where they find it, in the product of the labor I employ. At present I have to pay

²⁴Ibid., p. 295.
exorbitant and unnecessary wages. Why? Because of those wages the laborer has to pay half or quarter as rent to the landlord. . . . Get rid of the landlord and I shall have all the capital he now steals. In addition I shall have cheap labor. That . . . is British common sense.25

The Duke of Domesday, owner of the Blayport estates, maintains that financiers like Sir Jafna are buying up estates for next to nothing and making millions on them, and that the landlords will get only $\frac{3}{2}$ per cent of what is left. The income tax and surtax will reduce the family fortune and make Sir Jafna richer than ever. His own idea of disaster is expressed as follows:

Jafna's grandsons will go to Eton. Mine will go to Polytechnic.26

However, since the new system, in abolishing death duties, will leave him some security, the landlord will support Sir Arthur. Thus the police, the military, the landlord, and the capitalist accept, as inevitable, the nationalization of capital and industry, and the redistribution of wealth. On the Rocks pictures the beginning of socialism, or more properly, communism in Britain, and upholds the author's theories of necessary political and economic change.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS OF LABOR AND LEISURE

A principle of socialism, according to Shaw, is the "management of the national income to secure the best possible welfare for all through a just sharing of the burden of service and of the benefit of leisure." By "burden of service" he means work; and by leisure he refers to time free from work or ordinary duties such as eating, sleeping, or dressing. Since no political system has yet acted on this principle, society owes much to Shaw, whose prose writings and dramatic works have exposed unpleasant facts concerned with labor and leisure.

Shaw became a socialist, he says, because he was curious enough to discover how some people got money for nothing while others slaved for thirteen shillings a week or less and died in the workhouse after a life of hard work. He observed that no plot of ground or bit of property produced either goods or rent unless men and women were working on it six days a week. Thus he learned that man lives on labor and not on property. He saw that man's work has been made more profitable by such things as roads,

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1G. B. Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, p. 95.
bridges, canals, railways, harbors, mills, factories and other improvements. Nevertheless, without daily labor devoted to the use and maintenance of such possessions, they fall into ruin and decay.²

Modern tools and machinery aided by steam, electricity, or other power, division of labor and mass production—these multiply the benefits of labor to such proportions that, by Shaw's deductions, in a fourteen-hour day, one person can produce a day's subsistence for several families, in addition to enough for his own needs. Or this day's work can maintain a chieftain's family in idleness and splendor and, in addition, support a fewer number of workers' families with barely enough to live on, or any distributive arrangement between the two extremes. By the same analysis, Shaw concludes that on a national basis, this condition would make it possible for fourteen million laborers, by hard work and low consumption of goods, to provide for a million families fourteen hours of daily leisure, in great luxury, without their contributing any work for the community, except the child-bearing of the women.³

According to Shaw, the purpose of capitalism is to procure labor as cheaply as possible, for the cheaper the labor, the greater the dividends. For this reason, British industrialists made foreign investments where low living standards

²Ibid., pp. 95-97. ³Ibid., pp. 246-248.
made cheap labor available. Shaw observed that by the latter half of the nineteenth century the evil effects of capitalistic control of labor and production were such as to threaten revolution. The greatest wrong, to Shaw, was that about 10 per cent of the population were supported by the 90 per cent who were robbed of their leisure time, their only means for enjoying life. 4

The dramatic works of Shaw give evidence of unfair division of labor and leisure, for practically each play contains characters from the low income level contrasted with immensely rich people dwelling in luxurious homes. The most grievous burdens of the working classes are inadequate incomes, unreasonably long working hours, unhealthful and dangerous working conditions, child labor in industry, and lack of security for sickness or old age.

In Misalliance, Tarleton, the underwear king, and his family are entertaining guests. Tarleton discovers a strange young man armed with a gun, attempting to even an old score with the plutocrat Tarleton. In conversation with Tarleton, he reveals both his personal and class hatred. He says that he has, for ten years, spent his days from nine to six, without daylight or fresh air, in a stuffy little den counting another man's money. He insists that he has an intellect and a soul, but the only

4Ibid.
use made of them is to count "tuppences and eighteen pences and two pound seventeen and ten pence and to total them at the end of the day, and see that nobody steals them." In describing his monotonous work, he says:

... I enter and enter, and add and add, and take money and give money, and fill cheques and stamp receipts; and not a penny of that money is my own: not one of those transactions has the smallest interest for me or anyone else in the world but him; and even he couldn’t stand it if he had to do it all himself.6

This bank clerk, though dissatisfied with his automaton-like existence, believes the bookkeeper to be in a worse position. That fellow actually envies him for the variety and liveliness of his job. The bookkeeper has to make fifty thousand entries a year, and not ten of the fifty thousand are ever referred to again. When the figures are counted and the balance sheet made out, the boss is not a penny richer. The clerk believes this to be a damnable waste of human life. When his outburst causes Tarleton to question his moral courage, the young man bitterly answers, revealing his weariness, hopelessness, and envy:

How can a man tied to a desk from nine to six be anything--be even a man, let alone a soldier? But I'll teach him and you a lesson. I've had enough of living a dog's life and despising myself for it. I've had enough of being talked down to by hogs like you, and wearing my life out for a salary that wouldn't

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5 Shaw, Misalliance, p. 70.
6 Ibid., pp. 70-71.
keep you in cigars. You'll never believe a clerk's a man until one of us makes an example of one of you. 7

Thus it is not only the long hours and monotony that the man despises; his humiliation and loss of self-respect are unforgivable.

The Doolittles of Pygmalion are representatives of the low income class of Londoners. Eliza, a young girl selling flowers on the streets at night, risks the dangers of such work. She cajoles and begs people to buy her violets, which bring her only a half crown nightly. Unkempt, unsanitary, and beggarly in appearance, she does this work from necessity, not from choice. Her father, Alfred, now middle-aged, must dye his hair to keep some younger man from getting his job as a dustman, for it is customary to dismiss workers when they are forty-five. With dismissal, the only thing left will be the workhouse.

Mrs. Warren, in Mrs. Warren's Profession, regrets the situation working girls must face. When she was young, she tells her daughter, she became a prostitute rather than remain a bar maid or take employment in a lead factory. Her half-sisters had chosen to be respectable and support themselves by honest labor. One of them, working twelve hours a week, died of lead poisoning; she had expected to "get a little paralyzed," but not to die from it. The other, who

7Ibid., p. 71.
married a government laborer, kept the home with their three children neat and tidy on eighteen shillings a week—until he took to drink. In discussing her own life as a prostitute, Mrs. Warren tells her daughter Vivian:

It's not work any woman would do for pleasure, goodness knows; though to hear the pious people talk you would suppose it was a bed of roses.\(^8\)

Mrs. Warren admits to her daughter Vivie that for a poor girl it is worth while because it pays better than any other employment open to her. Still, she thinks there should be better opportunities for women. Vivie, who has been shielded from poverty, inquires:

Mother: suppose we were both poor as you were in those wretched days, are you quite sure that you wouldn't advise me to try the Waterloo bar, or marry a laborer, or even go into a factory?\(^9\)

Her mother answers that she would not. Vivie could not keep her self-respect in such starvation and slavery. If she, Mrs. Warren, had listened to the clergyman, she would now be scrubbing floors for one and sixpence a day, with nothing to look forward to except the workhouse infirmary. Always it is the fear of the workhouse that looms like a prison over the insecure.

Morell, the socialist clergyman in *Candida*, is assisting a movement for improving the conditions of the working

\(^8\)Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, p. 68.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 68.
classes. His father-in-law, an ignorant, offensive employer, or sweater, calls on him after an estrangement of three years' duration. Morell had caused him to lose a contract because of the low wages paid in his factory to women workers, Morell's parishioners, who were driven by starvation to the streets. Confessing that he was in the wrong, Burgess seeks a reconciliation, and boasts that he is now a model employer. He has installed machinery which is run by men whose minimum wage is six pence an hour. The skilled workers now receive Trade Union rates. However, Morell discovers that Burgess has made all these improvements because of coercion by the County Council, which, Burgess says, is made up of meddling fools. Morell is discouraged on learning the real reason for his pay boost.

The "sweater" defends his position as follows:

Woy helse should I do it? What does it lead to but drink and happiness in workin men? It's hall very well for you, James: it gits you hinto the papers and makes a great man of you: but you never think of the arm you do, puttin money into the pockets of workin men that they dunno ow to spend, and takin it from people that might be makin a good huse on it.10

Though the theme of Candida is not labor reforms, it shows indication of the growth of socialistic trends in the public mind. Burgess admits to Morell that he had formerly considered him a fool, but now times have changed. He says:

Five yorr (year) ago, no sensible man would a thought o takin hup with your hidears .... You and your crew are gittin hinfluential: I can see that. They'll ave to give you somethink someday, if it's honly to stop your mouth.11

This play, published in 1895, helped publicize the social-istic ideas of labor and of minimum wage laws which the Fabian Society was spreading by lecture and tracts.

Shaw, in his "Preface" to The Millionaireess, raises two questions: first, what is to be done with people whose talent is for moneymaking; and second, whether ambitious people with commanding business ability are to be allowed to become masters of society. Of these natural-born bosses, he says:

History and daily experience teach us that if the world does not devise some plan of ruling them, they will rule the world; for the secret of moneymaking is to care for nothing else and to work at nothing else; and as the world's welfare depends on operations by which no individual can make money, whilst its ruin by war and drink and disease and drugs and debauchery is enormously profitable to moneymakers, the supremacy of the moneymaker is the destruction of the State.12

In this comedy, Epifania, a talented business woman, submits to the provisions of a test of character imposed by a gentleman's mother on anyone who might eventually wish to marry her son. He has sworn that if he is tempted to marry, he will hand the woman two hundred piastres and

11Ibid., p. 213.

12Shaw, The Millionaireess, p. 106.
require her to go out into the world and earn her living unaided for six months. Should the woman succeed, he must marry her "though she were the ugliest devil on earth."

Epifania learns that the doctor's mother was a washerwoman who, though a widow, raised eleven children. Epifania accepts her challenge and in the following act she is seen among total strangers in a basement in the Commercial Road. She asks an elderly, poor, ratlike man for employment. His wife covers up a pile of old clothing which she has been mending. Though Epifania has covered her dress with an old coat and topped it off with a badly damaged hat, the couple are afraid of her. Perhaps she is the inspector, checking the place for violations of the employer's contract. Epifania sees an uncovered gas engine and six women working nearby. Such a condition is now against the law. The engine and hired help put the employer under the Workshop Act.

Of course the place does not meet the requirements, but the man tells Epifania his employees would not want inspection any worse than he because it would only cause the place to be closed and the women to be without work. In such a cheap business, he cannot afford to pay trade union wages nor offer sanitary arrangements. Neither can he make the place safe by fencing in the machinery. His problem is like that of other small business manufacturers: he must undersell those who have big machinery; and to do so, he must
employ labor cheaper than the Trade Union rate. He would have
to close his business within a week if he should buy the
improvements specified by the government. These unskilled women workers would be worse off, because they would have no income.

Epifania learns that they are working for "tuppence hapenny an hour for twelve hours a day," and a good worker can make twelve to fifteen shillings a week. The employer insists on the fairness of his wages on the grounds that it was the standard government wage at the beginning of the war. He can not pay more than the British government! Epifania wonders how a girl can live on twelve shillings a week. The woman sees nothing to prevent her doing so. When the employer was a girl in a match factory, she made five shillings a week which certainly helped out at home. Girls who had no families could easily get someone to take them in for a four and sixpence weekly wage.

This situation is an example of one element which kept cheapening labor for years. By using girls who had partial support from their fathers, capitalistic industry was securing full time work from them when they were not paying the equivalent of a day's support for wages. Hence, fathers or other guardians were actually helping finance capitalism by furnishing food for their workers.

Epifania's conversation with her new employers reveals the unpleasant life of the small-time business man, as well
as that of his employees. When she refers to him as a sweater, he says:

Sweaters! Who are you calling sweaters?
Epifania. Man, know thyself. You sweat yourself; you sweat your wife; you sweat those women in there; you live of sweat.
The Man. That's no way to talk about it. It isn't civil. I pay the right wages, same as everybody pays. I give employment that the like of them couldn't make for themselves.13

Clearly, this man is a type of employer who evades the labor reform laws made for the protection of unskilled workers.

In 1933 Shaw published On the Rocks, a philosophic study of the depression era with its class wars, unemployment, and widespread symptoms of national bankruptcy. The leading character, the Prime Minister, who, like the skipper mentioned by Captain Shattover in Heartbreak House, has let the ship run on the rocks. That which is terrorizing the nation is the greatest unemployment the world has ever known. Shaw has tried to warn the country that this situation would follow a period of foreign investments making use of cheap labor. Having no remedy for the situation, the Prime Minister is resigning in order that a stronger man may rule by force. At this time in European history, Hitler and the other dictators were apparently successful in rescuing their own national banks from the rocks. Shaw,

13Ibid., p. 176.
like many other political scientists, was giving the element of force greater respect than it was due.

Sir Arthur, the Prime Minister, is not unhappy to resign his post. He comforts his wife by saying:

Don't fuss dearest: I'm not unhappy. I am enjoying the enormous freedom of having found myself and got myself off my mind. . . . Do you think I didn't know, in the days of my great speeches and my roaring popularity, that I was only whitewashing the slums? . . . I couldn't help knowing as well as any of those damned Socialists that though the West End of London was shockful of money and nice people all calling one another by their Christian names, the lives of the millions of people whose labor was keeping the whole show going were not worth living.  

He concludes by saying that he has been able to put this out of his mind while he thought nothing could be done about it, but now he knows it can be helped. Forced labor, though it may cause cruelty and desolation for his own class, the aristocracy, is the unemployment solution he has in mind. The "Preface" to Too True to Be Good, containing ten laws of the Fundamental Natural Conditions of Human Society, says of enforced labor:

. . . The individual citizen has to be compelled not only to behave himself properly, but to work productively. . . . the personal slavery of the compulsion to work lasts only as many hours daily as suffice to discharge the economic duties of the citizen, the remaining hours (over and above those needed for feeding, sleeping, locomotion, etc.) being his leisure.  

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15 Shaw, "Preface," Too True to Be Good, p. 16.
This play, *Too True to Be Good*, was written in 1931, and, like *On the Rocks*, advocates a totalitarian type of government which Shaw still believed to be the natural successor of democracy.

In my opinion, *Major Barbara* upholds Shaw's theories of work better than any other of his plays. Undershaft, the industrialist, is a man following the direction of the Life Force, the God-in-man power which compels individuals to do certain things, even when they themselves do not comprehend the reasons. Undershaft's religion is money and gunpowder, the command of life and the command of death. The Salvation Army shelter scene is peopled with the dregs of society. Unemployed because of old age, illness, or incompetence, they eat the bread of charity. Shirley, though only forty-five, has been dismissed from his job where he has worked for ten years. Without insurance, old age pension, or unemployment compensation Shirley speaks of millions like himself, who can still do more work than "any fat young soaker."

In the Undershaft munitions plant, the workers' village is so ideally perfect that the Undershaft family are amazed. Lying between two Middle-sex hills, the almost smokeless town of white walls, green slate or red tile roofs, tall trees, domes, campaniles, and slender chimneys makes a
perfect picture. Barbara says, "It's all horribly, frightfully, immorally, unanswerably perfect."

The village boasts a nursing home, libraries, and schools, a Town Hall with a ball room and banqueting chamber. Security measures for the workers and their families are the insurance fund, the pension fund, the building society, and various co-operative organizations. Mrs. Undershaft is impressed more with the lovely little houses, the plate and linen, the furniture, orchards, and gardens. Stephen, her son, wonders if all this pampering has not affected the workers by sapping their independence and weakening their sense of responsibility. Although he enjoyed eating in their restaurant, he does not understand how the excellent food could have been served for threepence. Surely these socialistic benefits are not good for workers' characters. His father informs him that if one is going to organize society, he may as well exert some effort to do it well. And, he adds:

Our characters are safe here. A sufficient dose of anxiety is always provided by the fact that we may be blown to smithereens at any moment.17

Barbara, confused with the morality of her father's manufacturing war materials, asks him to justify himself, to show her some light shining through the darkness of the

16Shaw, Major Barbara, p. 422.
17Ibid., p. 425.
dreadful place, with its beautifully clean workshops, respectable workmen, and model homes. He tells her that cleanliness and respectability do not need justification, because they justify themselves. In her Salvation Army shelter he has seen poverty, misery, cold, and hunger. Barbara gave the people bread, treacle, and dreams of heaven. Undershaft gives his men thirty shillings a week and two thousand a year, and they find their own dreams. He saves their souls just as he has saved Barbara's, by feeding, clothing, and housing her. He provided enough money for her to be wasteful, careless, and generous, which saved her soul from the seven deadly sins. These, he tells her, are food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability, and children. The only thing to lift those milestones from man's neck is money. When he lifted them from Barbara's neck he saved her from the worst of crimes—poverty. Undershaft credits poverty with all the social evils. Millions of poor, abject, dirty, ill fed, ill clothed people poison society morally and physically, kill happiness, and force the necessity for police measures for protection against their violence. He tells Barbara to bring her half-saved ruffian to him and he will give him a permanent job with thirty-eight shillings a week, and a sound house to live in. Then, he continues,

In three weeks he will have a fancy waistcoat; in three months a tall hat and a chapel sitting;
before the end of the year he will shake hands with a duchess at a Primrose League meeting, and join the Conservative Party.\footnote{Ibid., p. 434.}

The saving grace of money raises the man from the almshouse to middle class respectability, and that within one year's time.

The wage scale is graduated in this miniature society, but it is started with a minimum wage, which is raised for skilled work. Shaw explains in \textit{Everybody's Political What's What} that the socialistic state will have inequalities of merit, that there will be sects, cliques, parties, and such, but that all citizens will be of an intermarriageable class. The Undershaft Village, then, is socialistic; it contains two or more churches and provisions for organizations of different types. The citizens are still individuals, but their souls are not enslaved by economic worries.
CHAPTER V

CONTROL OF PRODUCTION

Production refers to the provision of the nation's goods, both necessities and luxuries. The socialistic program, which Shaw sponsors, requires the production of national wants "in the order of their importance, allowing no money to be wasted on whims and luxuries until necessities have been thoroughly served."\(^1\) The important question of government controls became acute after the British, by means of excess capital and modern machinery, became the workshop of the world.

Shaw, in the "Preface" to The Apple Cart, says:

\[\ldots\text{there are two inseparable main problems: the economic problem of how to produce and distribute our substance, and the political problem of how to select our rulers and prevent them from abusing their authority.}\ldots\] \(^2\)

The capitalistic method of solving economic problems, according to Shaw, achieves miracles in production, but is a disastrous failure in the distribution of its products, that is, in providing for the vital needs of society. Industry becomes paralyzed by overproduction of certain

\(^1\)G. B. Shaw, The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, p. 57.

products, while the public is made to suffer by the lack of food, clothing, and other necessary articles. 3

Shaw believes that uncontrolled private enterprise is to blame for the wrong distribution of both industrial and agricultural goods, and that controls should be instituted "so that nobody can buy a diamond ring while children go naked or in rags." 4

The fact that government inspection has been successful in improving labor conditions convinces him of the desirability of controlled production. He says:

Only by stern laws enforced by constant inspection have we stopped the monstrous waste of human life and welfare it cost when it was left uncontrolled by the government. 5

Private enterprise, in control of manufacturing war materials, led the nation, during World War I, to the verge of defeat, and was responsible for the death of many men. Shaw credits private enterprise with attempting to meet the demands of a nation at war, but thinks "they had to be taught to do it economically, and to keep their accounts properly by government officials." 6 The strongest argument for government control of production is that foreign investments have caused England to depend on imported goods. The following lines explain his idea:

3Ibid. 4Ibid., p. 175.
5Ibid., p. 183. 6Ibid.
When England's first need was to demolish the slums in which her people were rotting, and nourish her children well enough to stop the frightful infant mortality in them, the needed capital was sent away to South America, Malaya, Egypt, the Congo, India, and wherever else native labor was cheaper: that is, where all the natives could live on less than the natives in the British Isles, poor as these were. 7

Thus in employing cheap foreign labor, industry has endangered the safety of the homeland. Deeply concerned, Shaw warns his people that they are resting on false supports. The fact that exports are greater than imports proves nothing. "The truth is," he says, "we have become dependent on other nations for the bread we eat, and a successful blockade would starve us." 8

Malone, Irish-American industrialist in Man and Superman, understands the importance of home production of food. What others call the Famine, a crisis occasioned by English importing Irish food products, Malone refers to as the Starvation. His speech reveals the disastrous effects in Ireland caused by England's dependence on imported food. He says:

"When a country is full o' food, and exporting it, there can be no famine. Me father was starved dead; and I was starved out to America in me mother's arms." 9

In event of war there is danger of any nation starving which

7 Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, p. 117.
8 Ibid., p. 118.
9 Shaw, Man and Superman, p. 662.
either exports or imports all surplus food crops. Ireland's 
poor peasants could not compete with the high food prices 
being paid by industrial England.

The English Prime Minister, in *On the Rocks*, inquires 
of the labor leader Hipney if unemployment crises are not 
usually of small consequence, and if trade does not always 
revive. Hipney answers:

> It used to. We was the workshop of the world then. But you gentlemen went out of the workshop 
business to make a war. And while that was going 
on our customers had to find out how to make things 
for themselves. Now we shall have to be their cus-
tomers when weve anything to buy with.10

This, written in 1933, pictures conditions during the eco-
nomic crisis which Shaw had prophesied would result from 
industry controlled by private enterprise. Foreign coun-
tries no longer depend on English manufacturing or have the 
money to buy their goods. The Prime Minister believes that 
much of the world still needs British goods, but Hipney, 
in the following lines, disillusions him:

> All goods is alike to that lot provided theyre 
the cheapest. . . . A Chinese coolie can live on a 
penny a day. What can we do against labor at a 
penny a day. . . . 11

Cheap labor, therefore, an element which socialism strives 
to abolish, is the cause of this economic crisis in post-war 
England. The Prime Minister is convinced that both labor


and production must be managed by government agencies, and that nationalization of farming and public control of foreign trade are also necessary if Britain is to survive. Shaw, like the Prime Minister, believes that by these means the nation "can not only feed herself, but maintain to the crack of doom the continual warfare she is continually waging somewhere." 12

Cabinet Members are discussing with King Magnus, in The Apple Cart, foreign investments and the production of luxury goods. Proteus, the Prime Minister, declares the government has abolished poverty and hardship, and now the English people are in solid middle-class comfort. Magnus denies that the government has brought this about, saying:

Our big business men have abolished them. But how? By sending our capital abroad to places where labor is cheap. We live in comfort on the imported profits of that capital. 13

The king is concerned for the security of a nation which depends on foreign labor, but the Cabinet members assure him that their prosperity is bound to last. Balbus refers him to Birmingham with its four square miles of confectionery works. "In the Christmas cracker trade," he says, "Birmingham is the workshop of the world." 14 Crassus, another member, boasts of his constituency in the following speech:

12 Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What, p. 118.
14 Ibid.
Do you know that there has not been a day's unemployment there for five years past, and that their daily output of chocolate creams totals up to twenty thousand tons?15

Ironically, Magnus tells Crassus that if the League of Nations should blockade the island, perhaps the nation could live on chocolate creams. Various ministers boast of other excellent English products which are being manufactured: golf clubs, potteries, the new crown Derby, the new Chelsea, tapestries, racing motor boats, and individually designed cars. The king cannot convince the Cabinet that, in the event of war, the nation would perish. When he is accused of being childish, Magnus says:

The more I see of the sort of prosperity that comes of your leaving our vital industries to big business men as long as they keep your constituents quiet with high wages, the more I feel as if I were sitting on a volcano.16

Thus, he concludes, production is controlled by free enterprise which is governed by politicians whose greatest concern is in being re-elected. The king alone realizes the dangers of uncontrolled private enterprise, and the inadequacy of the government to prevent social disaster.

15 Ibid., p. 221.
16 Ibid., p. 222.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

George Bernard Shaw, like other members of the Fabian Society, believed that the fundamental principle of socialism is an equal division of the national income to be effected by a cautious, gradual change in the British politico-economic system. His greatest individual contribution to economic thought is an uncompromising condemnation of poverty and the evaluation of money, that is, purchasing power, as the most important thing in the world. Poverty should be divested of sentimentality, or as he expresses it, "should be neither pitied as an inevitable misfortune; nor tolerated as a just retribution for misconduct, but resolutely stamped out and prevented from recurring as a disease fatal to society."¹ Money, to Shaw, is most important in that it is conducive to desirable home life, personal well-being, political privileges, and cultural advantages. As a social agent, money works for both the elevation of worthy people and the self-destruction of the unworthy.

In regard to his dramatic writings, Shaw says:

There is behind my plays a thought-out sociology which makes them fundamentally unlike those by authors

¹Maurice Colbourne, *The Real Bernard Shaw*, p. 283.
to whom knowledge of society means that peas should not be eaten with a knife, nor a knight's wife called Lady Polly Jones instead of Lady Jones. 2

Both Shaw's political and dramatic writings maintain that the cause of British inequalities is the three-class social system which has been perpetuated by primogeniture. From this system came the minority control of wealth and the monopoly of the professions and of aesthetic culture. Since it is by cheapening labor that the landlord and industrialist classes obtain their surplus of capital, the caste system is responsible, also, for the poverty of the unpropertied classes and for their personal and social degradation. Shaw also credits it with the high incomes of the professional people, designated as rent of ability, which are monopolized by the middle and upper classes. To the proletariat, the doors are closed to medical practice, the clergy, education, military command, and all other desirable vocations. Among the upper classes, the practice of politico-economic marriages defeats the possibility of natural selection of mates. Class irresponsibility, immorality, and snobbery caused by such marriages are portrayed in Shaw's earlier dramas: Widowers' Houses, The Philanderer, You Never Can Tell, Candida, and Overruled. Among the plays revealing the economic oppression suffered by the proletariat are Arms and the Man, Widowers' Houses,

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2G. B. Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches, p. 159.
The Doctor's Dilemma, The Millionaireess, Pygmalion, and Candida.

Studies of the evils of landlordism and its twin, capitalism, are enacted in John Bull's Other Island, Heartbreak House, The Millionaireess, The Apple Cart, Geneva, and On the Rocks. Buoyant Billions, which was unavailable for this survey, is listed by the critics as another play treating of capitalism.

According to Shaw, the wealth of the nation, owned and controlled by the landlords and capitalists, is rented to industrialists for interest money. Thus private enterprises, managed by financiers held accountable to no one, are responsible for the insecurity and poverty of the laboring class. Natural born "bosses," whose genius is the accumulating of fortunes, use despotic methods in dealing with the poor. Not only individuals but also small businesses suffer as a result of these unscrupulous financiers. Four plays giving particularly good analyses of capitalism in action are The Millionaireess, The Apple Cart, Heartbreak House, and John Bull's Other Island.

The greatest evils brought about by private control of capitalism are foreign investment of British capital, the use of cheap foreign labor by peoples with living standards lower than those of the British, the maintenance
of an idle rich class, and the burdens of long hours, inadequate wages, women and children in factories and mines, and insecurity for sickness and old age. Proof of these social evils may be found to some degree in any of Shaw's plays, for they reflect society as it is and not as it may be desired.

In regard to foreign investments and cheap labor, Shaw asserts that the effects are not only economic instability among the working classes, but also the certainty of national disaster in the event of war. With practically all of England's food being imported from foreign countries, and home labor and industry devoted to satisfying the desires of the idle rich, the enemy by use of blockade can starve England to submission. Modern industry over-produces certain goods listed as luxury items, but fails to supply food, clothing, and other vital needs in such abundance as to make the prices accommodate the low-income groups.

Shaw is convinced that society now possesses the machinery to provide for man's physical wants; the next thing needed is an economic system to make the machinery take care of the problems of production. According to Shaw, private enterprise, during World War I, failed in the mass production of war materials to such an extent that the nation was endangered and many servicemen's lives lost.
Since it was only by government intervention that complete disaster was averted, governmental control of industry is not only necessary in time of war but also justified in time of peace.

For Shaw, socialism is the solution to the politico-economic problems created by the increase in population from the thousands into the millions, together with the industrial advancement from crude labor to power production. Among the supporters of collectivism, Shaw includes the police, the military, the landlord, and the capitalist. The old Conservative party, decreasing in number, stands alone in resisting the political and economic changes. The Prime Minister, in On the Rocks, repeats the factors which Shaw lists in his political writings as requisites of a socialistic system. These are nationalization of ground rents, banks, collieries, transports, abolition of tariffs, prohibition of private foreign trade in protected industries, restoration of agriculture and collective farming, and ruthless extinction of parasitism by compulsory work for all. To finance national crises, the income tax and surtax should be increased. These measures, Shaw insists, will make Britain self-supporting and blockade-proof. In due process of time, the ideal social state with equality in basic income and one inter-marriageable class will preserve Britain from the fate of decadent civilizations.
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