CHAPTER I

THE UNCONSCIOUS GROWTH OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES

A WANDERING tribe of savages is merely a transitory assemblage of human beings. Possessing no social structures, no framework around which its units can cluster, the horde can and does easily divide into parts, each of which henceforth leads a separate existence. Increase of numbers, scarcity of food, dissensions, frequently provide the occasion for such division, and the resulting smaller groups carry on their lives as easily as before.

This transitory human assemblage becomes a social organism when, and in so far as, it acquires separate structures. As these structures increase in number and definiteness, social life increases in coherence. For the multitudinous parts of the social organism, each performing a separate function necessary to the full life of the whole, are then bound together by mutual dependence. Separation into parts then becomes impossible, because the parts, though distinct, are dependent upon reciprocal aid for the continuance of their lives.

Social evolution, like all evolution, therefore, proceeds by the gradual accumulation of small changes, from the structureless state, through a state of few and vague structures, to a state of multiform and definite structures. Among savages there is no unlikeness of occupations except that which is imposed by difference of sex. Every adult male is a hunter, warrior, armourer, and builder. Every adult female digs roots, catches fish, prepares skins, and acts as a beast of burden.

Civilisation, even of the most rudimentary kind, pre-

supposes some division of labour, and advances as these divisions multiply. Farmers and agricultural labourers, manufacturers and operatives, wholesale and retail dealers and their employees, the several professions and the various governmental agencies, as well as innumerable other divisions and their several subdivisions, form differentiated but mutually dependent groups, making the social organism variegated in the highest degree. Groups of men are thus made unlike each other by the discharge of unlike functions in maintaining the lives of all.

This multiplication of social structures is accompanied by a like growth in the definiteness of each of them. In civilised societies each group, carrying on separate and differentiated occupations, is clearly defined and specialised. The inhabitants of towns no longer cultivate fields; farmers no longer spin their own yarn and weave their own clothes, are now abandoning even the making of butter. Nor do weavers now carry on agriculture as a subsidiary means of earning a livelihood; goldsmiths no longer act as bankers, nor builders as architects. Nay, the process of specialisation has proceeded so far that special groups devote themselves to the making of parts of things only.

This multiplication of increasingly definite structures results in greater interdependence and consequently greater coherence. Each structure as it becomes more efficient in the discharge of its particular function becomes less capable of performing any other function. Each structure, therefore, depends for the efficient discharge of its function upon the efficient discharge of their respective functions by all other structures. The groups which carry on mining, manufacturing, transporting, and exchanging, as well as those discharging other social functions, depend upon the agricultural group for their food supply; while the agricultural group would be unable to efficiently produce food without the assistance of the mining, manufacturing, transporting, and exchanging groups. Similarly all forms of manufactures depend upon mining and agriculture for the supply of raw material; while mining depends again upon manufactures for its machines, tools, explosives, and other necessaries. Similarly close is the interdependence

of the various groups of manufactures, and their dependence, as well as that of all other producing groups, upon the transporting and exchanging groups. The latter, conditioned in its turn by the producing groups, has evolved interdependent groups of wholesale and retail dealers, brokers and agents, and the existence of this exchanging system implies the existence of roads, railways, canals; of vehicles, ships, and boats; of posts, telegraphs, and telephones; and of the separate organisation of the carrying trade. The development of this system of transport and communication is in its turn conditioned by and dependent upon that of the various producing groups and of the exchanging organisations which connect them with each other and with those social groups which provide for the satisfaction of other than material desires. All this mutual dependence upon reciprocal aid is made possible by the existence of still other groups, which, ensuring efficient defence against external and internal aggression, are in their turn maintained by the efforts of all other groups.

A social organism is thus a highly complex compound of multitudinous, specialised, interdependent, and mutually conditioned structures akin to those of which animal organisms are compounded. And as, when in animal organisms any structure ceases to perform its functions, there results either the cessation of the performance of their respective functions by all other structures, *i.e.* death, or at least such a strain on other structures as adversely affects the whole organism, so like results follow if any social structure ceases to perform its functions. And as no structure of any animal organism can carry on its activities when separated from the rest, so are the groups forming each social structure unable to carry on their activities when separated from all other groups.

This growth in the number and definiteness of structures is not confined to the industrial life of a nation. The chief of a small tribe may easily perform all governmental functions while producing his own sustenance. When, however, the social organism has grown into a compound of several tribes, the greater number of the

British Constitution, nay, of the British Empire itself, as well as the spontaneous growth of law and the equally spontaneous differentiation of the several departments of government, are now accepted facts, and are similarly true of every other nation. Not the will of individual rulers, of the great men of history, but the natures of the individual citizens, as derived through heredity and conditioned by the past history of the race, and the conditions now surrounding them, determine the form and character of the government of every nation.

A survey of the field of social structures thus shows that human society is an ever-changing organism, owing its growth to no premeditated plan, but to the spontaneous action of the units which compose it; each of whom, efficiently seeking to gratify his own desires, unconsciously contributes to the gratification of others' desires and to the ever-changing structural organisation of the society to which he belongs. The governing agencies, themselves the outcome of this unconscious action, may in some directions modify this spontaneous growth. Compared with the innumerable instances of hindrance of social growth by governmental interference, those which show furtherance are very rare.

Socialism disregards the history of social evolution, the unconscious growth here inadequately sketched; involves its discontinuance and the substitution for it of a conscious and premeditated further evolution. For if the State conducts all industries, future changes in the organisation of industries can only be made under the direction of the State. No longer would changes of structures result from spontaneous individual action directed towards the satisfaction of individual desires. Such changes could then come only from State action consciously directed towards structural changes. And as the State conduct of industries and equality of distribution involve the control by the State of the professions, of all scientific and artistic bodies, in fact of all social structures, no changes in any of them could arise except through the conscious action of the regulative agency. Unconscious evolution would thus be supplanted by consciously directed evolution throughout

the social organism. Can the latter process supply an efficient substitute for the former?

As in all other organisms, the gradual and spontaneous evolution of structures serviceable to human society is equalled by the gradual and spontaneous decline of structures no longer serviceable. The evolution of new and more serviceable structures frequently displaces older and less serviceable structures, while it may stimulate the growth of other structures.

Thus the growth of the bicycle industry has adversely affected various other industries, as the manufacture of pianos, of music, and of silken fabrics, while stimulating that of certain woollen dress materials. The manufacture of matches has put an end to that of steel, flints, and tinder; the manufacture of coal-tar colours has reduced the cultivation of indigo and madder, and the preparation of cochineal; the rise of mechanical weaving almost annihilated hand-loom weaving; and railways have largely displaced the transport of goods and passengers over roads.

The accumulation of knowledge, of discoveries and inventions, is partly the result and partly the cause of structural evolution. The gradual improvement of primitive tools into modern machinery would have been impossible in the absence of differentiation of occupations; and each improvement in implements and processes has made possible, if not necessary, further differentiation. As long as a spinning-wheel and simple hand-loom were the most efficient implements in general use for the conversion into fabrics of wool, flax, and cotton, a farmer's wife and daughters could usefully devote some of their time to spinning, while weavers could, with equal advantage, use their unemployed time in agriculture. But the invention and extended adoption of spinning machinery and power-looms made such subsidiary occupations economically disadvantageous. Specialising and extending the spinning and weaving industries, these inventions also rendered the occupation of farming more specialised. Similarly, the invention of cream-separators, while specialising and extending the manufacture of butter, has, by reducing the

manufacture of home-made butter, still further specialised the occupation of farming.

While thus furthering the specialisation and growth of existing structures, inventions and discoveries cause the rise of new and additional structures. The numerous groups engaged in the manufacture of electrical appliances and in the supply of electric light and power; those who are engaged in the manufacture of bicycles, of motor-cars, and of refrigerating machinery; others which supply frozen, desiccated, compressed, and tinned foods,—are recent examples of this causation.

Change in demand, induced by the supply of new and more useful services or by mere changes in desire, is the proximate cause of the growth of structures, either in addition to or at the expense of other structures. Thus changes in desire have reduced the mohair industry to meagre proportions, while fostering the manufacture of cashmeres, and have almost terminated the manufacture of crinolines and roller-skates.

Change in demand is, however, not the ultimate cause of the evolution of new structures. For before a change in demand, or an additional demand, can arise, the demanded thing must be known. Some supply must, therefore, precede demand. Hence, new structures are created by individuals or groups of individuals, who endeavour by the production of some new thing to satisfy their desires with less exertion. If the new structure proves serviceable to others, their increasing demand causes its growth and may consequently cause the decline or disappearance of other structures. If the new structure prove unserviceable, the absence of demand rapidly causes it to disappear again. But it is of importance to observe, that before the new structure can prove its utility, it must have begun to discharge its functions. Change in demand, therefore, while inducing alterations in the relative size and importance of existing structures and the disappearance of useless structures, cannot be the originating cause of new structures. The origin of new structures is due to the initiative of intending suppliers. While not undervaluing the importance of the structural changes induced by the

former cause, it is nevertheless evident that those induced by the latter are of greater importance.

Structural changes, due to the action of individual suppliers, are impossible in the socialist State. As all industries are managed by the State, inventions and discoveries can only be adopted by the governing agency. This change, combined with equality of reward, must reduce to a minimum the most important feature of social growth, the addition of new structures and the supersession of old structures by new structures.

As every man and woman must be compelled to work at his or her appointed task a given number of hours every working day, the researches and experiments which result in discoveries and inventions would be largely restricted. No one, except those appointed by the State to do such work, could carry on researches and experiments during working hours, and all other intending discoverers and inventors would, therefore, be restricted to their spare time for such work. At the same time no private person would possess the necessary means for lengthy and costly researches and experiments. By far the greater part of the inventive and scientific genius of the nation would thus be rendered fruitless.

Moreover, the remainder would be rendered less fruitful, because Socialism would withdraw the most powerful motive, or at least one of the most powerful motives, which induce men to devote their energies to the invention of new processes and implements. For as equality of material reward is one of the fundamental tenets and an absolute necessity of Socialism, inventors and discoverers could not receive any pecuniary reward for additions to the wellbeing of society, however great these might be.

Socialists generally maintain that, in the absence of such pecuniary reward, men would be impelled to make discoveries and inventions, partly by the necessities of their nature and partly by the honourable distinction which success would confer upon them. However true this may be of some exceptional men, it cannot be true of all inventors and discoverers. Moreover, even in the case of the exceptions, the impossibility of obtaining any

material reward obviously withdraws one of the main motives which stimulate their efforts. Two causes would thus be active in reducing the number of those who otherwise would devote their labour to the mostly thankless task of improving the appliances and methods of industry. Fewer men therefore would do so, and these would be impelled less powerfully in this direction. Hence the number of inventions and discoveries would be enormously reduced.

At the same time the adoption of such discoveries and inventions as might still be made would be largely hindered. The adoption of new processes and appliances frequently involves the discarding of existing processes and appliances. Employers are loth to do so, on account of the pecuniary sacrifice involved, and workmen generally object to change the system of working to which they have been accustomed. The stimulating action of competition overcomes these obstacles. The employer who first adopts an invention or new process does so in the expectation of gaining an advantage over his competitors; while other employers subsequently adopt it in order to minimise the advantage which the former has gained. Workmen waive their objection, either in response to the expectation of higher earnings, or forced by the insecurity of employment.

None of these motives actuates the officials of the State. They can gain no personal advantage from the adoption of inventions and discoveries which must impose upon them additional exertion and responsibility and may expose them to unpopularity, not only on account of the expense involved, but also on account of resulting changes in working methods.

Moreover, inventions do not generally spring perfect from the brain of man. On the contrary, when any industrial difficulty invites the application of inventive genius, many unsuccessful attempts at its solution generally precede the successful one. The successful inventor, however, has almost always profited by the failures of his predecessors. As a socialist writer[1] happily expresses it:—

[1] John A. Hobson, *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, p. 57.

"The earlier increments of a great invention make no figure in the annals of history because they do not pay, and the final increment which reaches the paying point gets all the credit, though the inherent importance and the inventive genius of the earlier attempts may have been as great or greater."

This almost certainty of many failures before a successful solution can be found must still further discourage State officials from adopting inventions. They would be blamed for failures while another might reap the praise for success to which their failures had contributed. It would be far safer to do nothing than to run this risk. Hence, to the absence of all inducement to experiment with new inventions there are added several motives on the part of officials, supported by widespread motives on the part of regulated workers, discouraging the adoption of inventions. Not only the inertia of officials, but their active opposition and that of the units composing the older structures, has to be overcome, before a new structure can arise or an old structure be removed. Those who oppose the adoption of new processes and appliances are numerous, organised, and consequently powerful; while those who urge it, having mostly no personal interest to serve, are few, unorganised, and therefore comparatively powerless. The opposition, moreover, has a powerful argument in the uncertainty of success of the contemplated change, which as yet has no practical proofs to offer. Under such circumstances, officials wedded to routine and dreading additional trouble and responsibility will generally decide in favour of things as they are.

Even at the present time, when the example or competition of private industry stimulates the action of State officials, their adoption of inventions and discoveries lags far behind. Innumerable examples might be quoted of State departments refusing for many years to use processes and appliances which privately conducted industries had proved to be advantageous. This tendency of State departments to remain in a groove is so distinct and universal that it has become proverbial. Yet this tendency must be infinitely greater under Socialism, on account of

the total absence of the stimulus which the existence of private industries provides.

Not only would Socialism largely reduce the discoveries and inventions which produce new industrial structures and supplant older ones, but it would also raise almost insuperable obstacles to the adoption of those which would still be made. It would, therefore, largely hinder if not entirely prevent the further growth of the social organism.

One more consideration must be glanced at. In the rare cases in which the predisposition of some powerful official might overcome these obstacles, another danger arises. As already pointed out, the growth of a new structure frequently involves the decline of one or more other structures. When demand is free, the growth of the new and the decline of the old structure can only take place on condition that the former is more serviceable than the latter. The whole body of consumers determines this question; and if their verdict is unfavourable to the new structure, it disappears. Under Socialism, however, the body of consumers is not free to give a verdict. The administration may cease to produce an old and preferred article in favour of a new and less acceptable one. Yet the consumers will be compelled to accept the latter in place of the former. Or—and here the danger is greater still—the administration may supersede a less laborious and costly process by one more laborious and costly. Neither the consumers nor any other agency could prevent such action. There is, therefore, no guarantee under Socialism, such as is now provided by the action of competition, that new structures would be more serviceable than the older structures which they displace. Not only would the evolution of new structures be rare, but such as did evolve might result in retrogression instead of progression.

There remains to be considered the influence of the socialist State on the alterations in the relative size and importance of structures which originate in changes of demand. Considerations advanced in the last paragraph show that, in the absence of private and competing in-

dustries, consumers are compelled to accept such goods and services as the State supplies. Freedom of demand would, therefore, be seriously restricted, and changes in the relative growth of structures would no longer be determined by their relative utility as proved by the action of individuals desiring their services. Such changes might be determined by the will of officials who might err as to the relative utility of structures, or who might be actuated by other considerations.

Nay, the State will be compelled largely to disregard the utility of structures as shown by the infallible test of demand, and will be compelled to abolish multitudinous structures which render social services. In order to regulate supply, the central regulative agency must determine how much of every kind and quality of goods will be required and shall be produced. Changing individual tastes and changing fashions render it impossible to make an even approximately correct calculation, while the regulative influence of changing values is lost. Therefore, the State would be compelled to abandon the infinite variety of qualities, designs, and colours which private industry supplies under the pressure of individual tastes. The desires of the consumers would be disregarded, the products of State industry would be confined to as few qualities, designs, and colours as possible, and these would inevitably become permanent. Not only would changes in the relative growth of structures be reduced, but the number of socially useful structures would be diminished. This diminution would, moreover, be added to by the disappearance of all those structures which subserve the wants of the wealthier classes.

The reduction in the number of socially useful structures and subsequent stagnation would, however, extend beyond the industrial field. As previously pointed out, science, art, and literature must be placed under State regulation if equality of remuneration is to be maintained. Not those best qualified, but only those selected by the regulating agency, would follow these pursuits. Instead of the eager and vigorous scientific, artistic, and literary life of to-day, with its ever multiplying and expanding

structures, there would arise Egyptian and Chinese conditions of barren formalism, monotony, and stagnation. A free press is likewise incompatible with the fundamental tenets of Socialism. The production of newspapers, like every other form of production, must be carried on by the State through paid officials. An enormous reduction in the number of daily, weekly, and monthly journals, and the utmost servility of the remaining ones, would thus be inevitable, reducing periodical literature to the same barrenness and stagnation as that inflicted upon general literature, science, and art.

The growth of a social organism, like that of all other organisms, is conditioned by the flexibility of its structures. Where permanency of structure has been attained, the growth of the organism ceases; where growth ceases, decline begins. The permanency and want of flexibility of structures which have been shown to be inevitable in the socialist State would, therefore, not only lead to the cessation of all further social progress, but to the loss of much of the progress achieved in the past. Stagnation, rapidly to be followed by retrogression, therefore, would be the lot of the nations, who, lacking the courage to undergo the strenuous exertion which the wellbeing of the race demands of them, would seek an inglorious repose in the enervating embrace of Socialism.