

We sometimes hear contemptuous references to Gas and Water Socialism, as if there could be no benefit and no progress in the part because it was not the whole. As if shorter hours, better pay, better and cheaper service, and vastly improved and beautified towns and cities were not worth having and not worth slaving for because the pay and the hours, the service and the amenities were not all they ought to be and will be under a further development of these institutions upon present lines. Let those who were disposed to belittle the Socialism of the municipality bethink them of the attack which is being made on it at present—by the *Times*, by Property Owners Associations, by economists of the British Association, by men like Mr Austin Chamberlain and Sir Alexander Henderson. These men know the significance of the principle underlying collectivist enterprises ; they know that the success of public enterprise on a small scale is simply paving the way for the great all-embracing Co-operative Commonwealth, in which not only the local bodies will administer their own local services, but in which we shall have State railways, State canals, State mines, the telephone amalgamated with the post office ; in a word, State control of all undertakings which can be better administered by the State than by either the local authorities or private enterprise.

This quiet municipal progress has been going on in spite of all the reaction manifested in Imperial politics. Indeed in some cases it has proceeded farthest and most rapidly where the people are most reactionary in Imperial politics. London and Glasgow have both voted Tory in Imperial politics, but both have returned progressive majorities to their local governing bodies, and the extension of communal collectivism goes on apace there as elsewhere.

While this far-reaching progress has been going on, the forces of discontent have been latterly massing, and at last the Government seems to have dug its own grave. Emboldened by strength and long immunity from electoral punishment, the Government introduced an Education Bill whose impudent retrogressiveness fairly takes one's breath away. The Bill not only wiped out the School Boards, but public control of education altogether, the management being now vested in close corporations overlooked by a powerless minority of ratepayers' representatives. The Bill ignored the success of secular education in Scotland. It ignored the steady growth of the Board School system in the English cities. It was drafted by people who do not seem to know that undenominational schools have flourished in Scotland for thirty years, producing results which England can nowhere touch. It was a priests' Bill—a Bill inspired by the conviction on the part of the English Church clergy that unless they catch the English man and woman as children, they will lose hold on them altogether, a position which, so far as the cities are concerned, is already practically realised. The Education Bill was surely one of the last spurts of the present reaction—and it will prove, I trust, as abortive, as short-lived, as it is