

## APPENDIX

### A PAPER ON ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS READ BEFORE THE FABIAN SOCIETY

[Footnote: I am indebted to Mr. E. R. Pease for some valuable corrections.--H. G. W.]

Let me begin this paper upon the question of Scientific Administrative areas in relation to municipal undertakings by defining the sort of Socialism I profess. Because, you know, it is quite impossible to conceal that there are very many different sorts of socialism, and your society is, and has long been, a remarkably representative collection of the various types. We have this much in common, however, that we insist upon and hammer home and never lose sight of the fact that Property is a purely provisional and law-made thing, and that the law and the community which has given may also, at its necessity, take away. The work which the Socialist movement has done is to secure the general repudiation of any idea of sacredness about property. But upon the extent to which it is convenient to sanction a certain amount of property, and the ways in which existing excesses of property are to be reduced, Socialists differ enormously. There are certain extreme expressions of Socialism that you will connect with the names of Owen

and Fourier, and with Noyes's "History of American Socialism," in which the abolition of monopoly is carried out with logical completeness to the abolition of marriage, and in which the idea seems to be to extend the limits of the Family and of intimate intercourse to include all humanity. With these Socialisms I have nothing in common. There are a large number of such questions concerning the constitution of the family upon which I retain an open and inquiring mind, and to which I find the answers of the established order, if not always absolutely incorrect, at any rate glaringly incomplete and totally inadequate; but I do not find the answers of these Socialistic Communities in any degree more satisfactory.

There are, however, more limited Socialisms, systems which deal mainly with economic organizations, which recognize the rights of individuals to possessions of a personal sort, and which assume without detailed discussion the formation of family groups within the general community. There are limited socialisms whose repudiation of property affects only the common interests of the community, the land it occupies, the services in which all are interested, the necessary minimum of education, and the sanitary and economic interaction of one person or family group upon another; socialisms which, in fact, come into touch with an intelligent individualism, and which are based on the attempt to ensure equality of opportunity and freedom for complete individual development to every citizen. Such socialists look not so much to the abolition of property as to the abolition of inheritance, and to the intelligent taxation of property for the services of the community. It

is among such moderate socialists that I would number myself. I would make no hard and fast rule with regard to any portion of the material and apparatus used in the service of a community. With regard to any particular service or concern, I would ask, Is it more convenient, more likely to lead to economy and efficiency, to let this service rest in the hands of some single person or group of persons who may offer to do the service or administer the concern, and whom we will call the owners, or to place it in the hands of some single person or group of persons, elected or chosen by lot, whom we will call the official or group of officials? And if you were to suggest some method of election that would produce officials that, on the whole, were likely to manage worse than private owners, and to waste more than the private owner's probable profits, I should say then by all means leave the service or concern in private hands.

You see upon this principle the whole question of the administration of any affair turns upon the question, Which will give the maximum efficiency? It is very easy to say, and it stirs the heart and produces cheering in crowded meetings to say, "Let everything be owned by all and controlled by all for the good of all," and for the general purposes of a meeting it is quite possible to say that and nothing more. But if you sit down quietly by yourself afterwards and try and imagine things being "owned by all and controlled by all for the good of all," you will presently arrive at the valuable discovery in social and political science that the phrase means nothing whatever. It is also very striking, on such rhetorical occasions, to oppose the private

owner to the community or the state or the municipality, and to suppose all the vices of humanity concentrated in private ownership, and all the virtues of humanity concentrated in the community, but indeed that clear and striking contrast will not stand the rough-and-tumble of the workaday world. A little examination of the matter will make it clear that the contrast lies between private owners and public officials--you must have officials, because you can't settle a railway time-table or make a bridge by public acclamation--and even there you will find it is not a simple question of the white against black order. Even in our state to-day there are few private owners who have absolute freedom to do what they like with their possessions, and there are few public officials who have not a certain freedom and a certain sense of proprietorship in their departments, and in fact, as distinguished from rhetoric, there is every possible gradation between the one thing and the other. We have to clear our minds of misleading terms in this affair. A clipped and regulated private ownership--a private company, for example, with completely published accounts, taxed dividends, with a public representative upon its board of directors and parliamentary powers--may be an infinitely more honest, efficient, and controllable public service than a badly elected or badly appointed board of governors of officials. We may--and I for one do--think that a number of public services, an increasing number of public services, can be best administered as public concerns. Most of us here to-night are, I believe, pretty advanced municipalizers. But it does not follow that we believe that any sort of representative or official body pitched into any sort of area is necessarily better than any sort of private

control. The more we are disposed to municipalize, the more incumbent it is upon us to search out, study, and invent, and to work to develop the most efficient public bodies possible. And my case to-night is, that the existing local government bodies, your town councils, borough councils, urban district boards, and so forth, are, for the purposes of municipalization, far from being the best possible bodies, and that even your county councils fall short, that by their very nature all these bodies must fall far short of the highest possible efficiency, and that as time goes on they must fail even more than they do now to discharge the duties we Fabians would like to thrust upon them. And the general reason upon which I would have you condemn these bodies and seek for some newer and ampler ones before you press the municipalization of public concerns to its final trial, is this--that their areas of activity are impossibly small.

The areas within which we shape our public activities at present, derive, I hold, from the needs and conditions of a past order of things. They have been patched and repaired enormously, but they still preserve the essential conceptions of a vanished organization. They have been patched and repaired first to meet this urgent specific necessity and then that, and never with any comprehensive anticipation of coming needs, and at last they have become absolutely impossible. They are like fifteenth-century houses which have been continuously occupied by a succession of enterprising but short-sighted and close-fisted owners, and which have now been, with the very slightest use of lath-and-plaster partitions and geyser hot-water apparatus, converted

into modern residential flats. These local government areas of to-day represent for the most part what were once distinct, distinctly organized, and individualized communities, complete minor economic systems, and they preserve a tradition of what was once administrative convenience and economy. To-day, I submit, they do not represent communities at all, and they become more wasteful and more inconvenient with every fresh change in economic necessity.

This is a double change. Let me first of all say a word in justification for my first assertion that existing areas do not represent communities, and then pass to a necessary consequence or so of this fact. I submit that before the railways, that is to say in the days in which the current conception of local government areas arose, the villages, and still more the boroughs, and even the counties, were practically complete minor economic systems. The wealth of the locality was, roughly speaking, local; rich people resided in contact with their property, other people lived in contact with their work, and it was a legitimate assumption that a radius of a mile or so, or of a few miles, circumscribed most of the practical interests of all the inhabitants of a locality. You got rich and poor in visible relationships; you got landlord and tenant, you got master and workman all together. But now, through a revolution in the methods of locomotion, and chiefly through the making of railways, this is no longer true. You can still see the villages and towns separated by spaces of fields and physically distinct, but it is no longer the case that all who dwell in these old limits are essentially local inhabitants and mutually interdependent as

once they would have been. A large proportion of our population to-day, a large and an increasing proportion, has no localized interests at all as an eighteenth-century person would have understood locality.

Take for example Guildford, or Folkestone, and you will find that possibly even more than half the wealth in the place is non-local wealth--wealth, that is, having no relation to the local production of wealth--and that a large majority of the more educated, intelligent and active inhabitants derive their income, spend their energies, and find their absorbing interests outside the locality. They may rent or own houses, but they have no reality of participation and little illusion of participation in any local life. You will find in both towns a considerable number of hotels, inns, and refreshment places which, although they are regulated by local magistrates upon a basis of one license to so many inhabitants, derive only a small fraction of their profits from the custom of the inhabitants. You find too in Folkestone, as in most seaside places, a great number of secondary schools, drawing scarcely a pupil from the neighbourhood. And on the other hand you will find labour in both towns, coming in by a morning train and going out at night. And neither of these instances is an extreme type. As you come in towards London you will find the proportion of what I would call non-local inhabitants increasing until in Brixton, Hoxton, or West Ham you will find the really localized people a mere thread in the mass of the population. Probably you find the thinnest sham of a community in the London boroughs, where a clerk or a working man will shift his sticks from one borough to another and move on to a third without ever

discovering what he has done. It is not that all these people do not belong to a community, but that they belong to a larger community of a new type which your administrators have failed to discover, and which your working theory of local government ignores. This is a question I have already written about with some completeness in a book published a year or so ago, and called "Anticipations," and in that book you will find a more lengthy exposition than I can give here and now of the nature of this expansion. But the gist of the argument is that the distribution of population, the method of aggregation in a community, is determined almost entirely by the available means of locomotion. The maximum size of any community of regular daily intercourse is determined by the length of something that I may best suggest to your mind by the phrase--the average possible suburban journey in an hour. A town, for example, in which the only method of progression is on foot along crowded ways, will be denser in population and smaller in area than one with wide streets and a wheeled traffic, and that again will be denser and compacter than one with numerous tubes, trams, and light railways. Every improvement in locomotion forces the suburban ring of houses outward, and relieves the pressure of the centre. Now, this principle of expanding communities holds not only in regard to towns, but also on the agricultural country side. There, also, facilities for the more rapid collection of produce mean finally the expansion and coalescence of what were previously economic unities.

Now if, while this expansion of the real communities goes on, you keep to the old boundary lines, you will find an increasing proportion of



your population straddling those lines. You will find that many people who once slept and worked and reared their children and worshipped and bought all in one area, are now, as it were, delocalized; they have overflowed their containing locality, and they live in one area, they work in another, and they go to shop in a third. And the only way in which you can localize them again is to expand your areas to their new scale.

This is a change in human conditions that has been a very distinctive event in the history of the past century, and it is still in progress. But I think there is excellent reason for supposing that for practical purposes this change, made by the railway and the motor, this development of local locomotion, will reach a definite limit in the next hundred years. We are witnessing the completion of a great development that has altered the average possible suburban journey in an hour from one of four or five miles to one of thirty miles, and I doubt very much whether, when every tendency of expansion has been reckoned with, this average hour journey will ever get much beyond sixty or seventy miles an hour. A radius of four or five miles marked the maximum size of the old community. A radius of a hundred miles will certainly mark the maximum of the new community. And so it is no effectual answer to my general argument to say that a revision of administrative areas always has been and always will be a public necessity. To a certain extent that always has been and always will be true, but on a scale in no way comparable to the scale on which it is true to-day, because of these particular inventions. This need in its

greatness is a peculiar feature of the present time, and a peculiar problem of the present time. The municipal areas that were convenient in the Babylonian, ancient Egyptian, or Roman empires were no larger and no smaller than those that served the purpose of seventeenth-century Europe, and I believe it is highly probable--I think the odds are in favour of the belief--that the most convenient administrative areas of the year 2000 will be no larger and no smaller than those for many subsequent centuries. We are, in this respect, in the full flow of a great and permanent transition. And the social and political aspect of the change, is this steadily increasing proportion of people--more especially in our suburban areas--who are, so far as our old divisions go, delocalized. They represent, in fact, a community of a new sort, the new great modern community, which is seeking to establish itself in the room of the dwindling, little, highly localized communities of the past.

Now what are the practical consequences of this large and increasing non-local element in your old local government areas? First, there is this. The non-local people do not follow, have neither the time, nor the freedom, nor the stimulus of sufficient interests to follow, local politics. They are a sort of Outlanders. Local politics remain therefore more and more in the hands of the dwindling section of people whose interests really are circumscribed by the locality. These are usually the small local tradesmen, the local building trade, sometimes a doctor and always a solicitor; and the most energetic and active and capable of these, and the one with the keenest eye to business, is

usually the solicitor. Whatever you put into the hands of a local authority--education, lighting, communications--you necessarily put into the hands of a group of this sort. Here and there, of course, there may be variations; an organized labour vote may send in a representative, or some gentleman of leisure and philanthropic tastes, like Mr. Bernard Shaw, may confer distinction upon local deliberations, but that will not alter the general state of affairs. The state of affairs you must expect as the general rule, is local control by petty local interests, a state of affairs that will certainly intensify in the years to come, unless some revision of areas can be contrived that will overtake the amplifying interests of the delocalized section of the population.

Let me point out what is probably the result of a dim recognition of this fact by the non-local population, and that is the extreme jealousy of rates and municipal trading by the less localized paying classes in the community. That is a question we Socialists, believing as we do all of us at least in the abstract theory of municipalization, must particularly consider. The easy exasperation of the £1000-a-year man at the rates and his extreme patience under Imperial taxation is incomprehensible, unless you recognize this fact of his delocalization. Then at once it becomes clear. He penetrates the pretences of the system to a certain extent; and he is infuriated by the fact of taxation without representation, tempered by a mysteriously ineffective voting paper left at his door. I myself, as one of the delocalized class, will confess he has my sympathy. And those who believe in the

idea of the ultimate municipalization of most large industries, will continue to find in this non-localized class, working especially through the medium of Parliament, a persistent and effective obstruction to all such projects, unless such a rectification of areas can be contrived as will overtake the delocalization and the diffusion of interests that has been and is still going on. I will confess that it seems to me that this opposition between the localized and the non-localized classes in the future, or to be more correct, the opposition between the man whose ideas and life lie in a small area, and the man whose ideas and life lie in a great area, is likely to give us that dividing line in politics for which so many people are looking to-day. For this question of areas has its Imperial as well as its local side. You have already seen the Liberal party split upon the Transvaal question; you yourselves have--I am told--experienced some slight parallel tendency to fission, and it is interesting to note that this was, after all, only another aspect of this great question of areas, which I would now discuss in relation to municipal trading. The small communities are fighting for existence and their dear little ways, the synthetic great communities are fighting to come into existence, and to absorb the small communities. And curiously enough at our last meeting you heard Mr. Belloc, with delightful wit and subtlety, expounding the very antithesis of the conceptions I am presenting to-night. Mr. Belloc--who has evidently never read his Malthus--dreams of a beautiful little village community of peasant proprietors, each sticking like a barnacle to his own little bit of property, beautifully healthy and simple and illiterate and Roman Catholic and local, local over

the ears. I am afraid the stars in their courses fight against such pink and golden dreams. Every tramway, every new twopenny tube, every light railway, every improvement in your omnibus services, in your telephonic services, in your organization of credit, increases the proportion of your delocalized class, and sucks the ebbing life from your old communities into the veins of the new.

Well, you may say, no doubt this is right so far as it goes; existing local government areas do not represent real countries, but still these local government devices are of service for cutting up and distributing administrative work. But that is exactly what they are not. They are worse when you consider them in regard to function, than when you consider them in regard to representation. Since our conceptions of what constitutes a local administrative area were developed there has arisen the problems of water supply and of organized sewage, of railways, tramways, and communications generally, and of lighting and telephonic intercourse; there hangs over us, though the average local authority has no eyes to see it, the necessity of adapting our roads to accommodate an increasing new traffic of soft-tyred vehicles, and it is not improbable that heating by wholesale, either by gas or electricity, will presently be also possible and desirable. For all these things we need wide views, wide minds and wide areas, and still more do we want wide views for the business of education that is now also coming into the sphere of local administration.

It happens that I have had an object-lesson in this matter of local

government; and indeed it is my object-lesson that has led to this paper to-night. I live upon the boundary line of the Sandgate Urban District Board, a minute authority with a boundary line that appears to have been determined originally about 1850 by mapping out the wanderings of an intoxicated excursionist, and which--the only word is interdigitates--with the borough of Folkestone, the Urban District of Cheriton, and the borough of Hythe. Each of these bodies is by way of being a tramway authority, each is at liberty to secure powers to set up generating stations and supply electricity, each is a water authority, and each does its own little drainage, and the possibilities of friction and litigation are endless. The four places constitute an urban area greatly in need of organized intercommunication, but the four authorities have never been able to agree upon a scheme; and now Folkestone is concerning itself with the project of a little internal tramway system all of its very own. Sandgate has succumbed to the spell of the South Eastern Railway Company, and has come into line with a project that will necessitate a change of cars at the Folkestone boundary. Folkestone has conceded its electrical supply to a company, but Sandgate, on this issue, stands out gallantly for municipal trading, and proposes to lay down a plant and set up a generating station all by itself to supply a population of sixteen hundred people, mostly indigent. In the meanwhile, Sandgate refuses its inhabitants the elementary convenience of the electric light, and when, quite inadvertently, I connected across the convolutions of the boundary with the Folkestone supply, my life was darkened by the threat of impossible litigation. But if Folkestone repudiates municipal enterprise in the

matter of lighting, I gather it does not do so in the matter of telephones; and there has been talk of a neat little Folkestone telephonic system competing against the National Telephone Company, a compact little conversazione of perhaps a hundred people, rate sustained. And how is the non-local inhabitant to come into these things? The intelligent non-local inhabitant can only save his two or three pounds of contribution to this folly or that by putting in twenty or thirty pounds' worth of work in local politics. He has no local connections, no local influence, he hasn't a chance against the plumber. When the house I occupy was built, it was a mere interposition of Providence that the drain did not go southward into a Folkestone sewer instead of northward into Sandgate. Heaven knows what would have happened if it had! I and my neighbours are by a special concession permitted to have water from the Folkestone source. By incessant vigilance we do, I believe, usually succeed in deducting the Folkestone water rate from the Sandgate general rate which covers water, but the wear and tear is enormous. However, these are details, dear to my heart, but the merest marginal comments to my argument. The essential fact is the impracticable silliness of these little divisions, the waste of men, the waste of nervous energy, the waste of administrative energy they involve. I am convinced that in the case of almost any public service in the Folkestone district with our present boundaries, the administrative waste will more than equal the profit of a private company with parliamentary powers overriding our local authorities; that if it is simply a choice between these little bodies and a company (of the common type even), then in lighting, locomotion, and indeed in

almost any general public service, I would say, "give me the company." With companies one may hope to deal later; they will not stand in the way of developing saner areas, but an obstinate little authority clutching everything in its hands, and led by a clerk naturally interested in litigation, and who is also something of an expert in political organization, will be an altogether harder thing to supersede.

This difficulty in greater or lesser degree is everywhere. In the case of poor law administration in particular, and also in the case of elementary education, the whole country displays what is another aspect of this same general phenomenon of delocalization; the withdrawal of all the wealthier people from the areas that are specializing as industrial centres, and which have a rising population of poor workers, to areas that are specializing as residential, and which have, if anything, a falling proportion of poor labourers. In a place like West Ham or Tottenham you find starved schools and an abundant delocalized industrial population, and, by way of contrast, at Guildford or Farnham for example, you will find enormously rich delocalized people, belonging to the same great community as these workers, who pay only the most trivial poor rate and school rate for the benefit of their few immediate neighbours, and escape altogether from the burthens of West Ham. By treating these places as separate communities you commit a cruel injustice on the poor. So far as these things go, to claim convenience for the existing areas is absurd. And it is becoming more and more evident that with tramways, with lighting, with electric



heating and force supply, and with the supply of water to great populations, there is an enormous advantage in large generating stations and large areas; that these things must be handled in areas of hundreds of square miles to be efficiently done.

In the case of secondary and higher education one discovers an equal stress and incompatibility. At present, I must point out, even the boundaries of the projected educational authority for London are absurdly narrow. For example, in Folkestone, as in every town upon the south coast, there are dozens of secondary schools that are purely London schools, and filled with London boys and girls, and there are endless great schools like Tonbridge and Charterhouse outside the London area that are also London schools. If you get, for example, a vigorous and efficient educational authority for London, and you raise a fine educational system in the London area, you will find it incomplete in an almost vital particular. You will give the prosperous middle class and the upper class of London the alternative of good teaching and bad air, or of what very probably, under tolerant local authorities, will be relatively bad teaching and open air and exercise out of London. You will have to tax this influential class of people for the magnificent schools they in many cases will be unable to use. As a consequence, you will find again all the difficulties of their opposition, practically the same difficulties that arise so naturally in the way of municipal trading. I would suggest that it would be not only logical but politic, for the London Educational Authority, and not the local authority, to control every secondary school wherever it

happened to be, which in an average of years drew more than half its attendance from the London area. That, however, by the way. The point more material to my argument here is that the educational organization of the London area, the Thames valley, and the southern counties are inseparable; that the question of local locomotion is rapidly becoming impossible upon any smaller basis than such an area; that roads, light railways, drainage, water, are all clamouring now to be dealt with on the big scale; and that the more you cut this great area up, the more you leave it in the hands of the localized men, the more you sin against efficiency and the light.

I hope that you will consider this first part of my case proved. And now I pass on to the more debatable question--the nature of the new divisions that are to replace the old. I would suggest that this is a matter only to be answered in detail by an exhaustive analysis of the distribution of population in relation to economic standing, but I may perhaps just indicate roughly what at a first glance I imagine would be one suitable local government area. Let me remind you that some years ago the Conservative party, in an outbreak of intelligence, did in a sort of transitory way see something of what I have been trying to express to-night, and created the London County Council--only to quarrel with it and hate it and fear it ever since. Well, my proposal would be to make a much greater area even than the London County, and try to include in it the whole system of what I might call the London-centred population. I believe If you were to take the whole valley of the Thames and its tributaries and draw a line along its boundary

watershed, and then include with that Sussex and Surrey, and the east coast counties up to the Wash, you would overtake and anticipate the delocalizing process almost completely. You would have what has become, or is becoming very rapidly, a new urban region, a complete community of the new type, rich and poor and all sorts and aspects of economic life together. I would suggest that watersheds make excellent boundaries. Let me remind you that railways, tramways, drain-pipes, water-pipes, and high-roads have this in common--they will not climb over a watershed if they can possibly avoid doing so, and that population and schools and poor tend always to distribute themselves in accordance with these other things. You get the minimum of possible overlap--such overlap as the spreading out of the great midland city to meet London must some day cause--in this way. I would suggest that for the regulation of sanitation, education, communications, industrial control, and poor relief, and for the taxation for these purposes, this area should be one, governed by one body, elected by local constituencies that would make its activities independent of imperial politics. I propose that this body should replace your county councils, boards of guardians, urban and rural district councils, and all the rest of them altogether; that you should elect it, perhaps triennially, once for all. For any purpose of a more local sort, local water-supply systems, local tramway systems--the tramways between Brighton and Shoreham, for example--this body might delegate its powers to subordinate committees, consisting, it has been suggested to me by Mrs. Sidney Webb, of the members for the local constituencies concerned, together with another member or so to safeguard the general interests,

or perhaps with an appointed expert or so in addition. These committees would submit their detailed schemes for the approval of committees appointed by the general body, and they would be controllable by that body. However, there is no need for detailed scheming here and now. Let us keep to the main idea.

I submit that such a mammoth municipality as this will be, on the one hand, an enormously more efficient substitute for your present little local government bodies, and on the other hand, will be able to take over a considerable proportion of the detailed work and a considerable proportion of the detailed machinery, of your overworked and too extensive central machinery, your local government board, education department, and board of trade. It will be great enough and fine enough to revive the dying sentiment of local patriotism, and it will be a body that will appeal to the ambition of the most energetic and capable men in the community. They will be picked men, to a much greater extent than are your guardians, your urban district councillors and town councillors and so on, at present, because there will be perhaps a hundred or a couple of hundred of them in the place of many thousands. And I venture to think that in such a body you may confidently hope to find a collective intelligence that may be pitted against any trust or board of directors the world is likely to produce.

I suggest this body as a sort of concrete sample of the thing I have in mind. I am quite open to hear and accept the most far-reaching modification of this scheme; it is the idea of the scale that I

wish particularly to enforce. Municipalize on this scale, I would say, and I am with you altogether. Here is something distinctly and clearly subserving that making of mankind upon which all sane social and political proposals must ultimately base themselves. But to put more power, and still more power in the hands of these petty little administrative bodies that we have to-day, is, I submit, folly and darkness. If the existing areas are to remain the same, then, on the whole, my vote is against municipal trading, and on the whole, with regard to light, to tramways and communications, to telephones, and indeed to nearly all such public services, I would prefer to see these things in the hands of companies, and I would stipulate only for the maximum publicity for their accounts and the fullest provision for detailed regulation through the Board of Trade.