

THE BASIS OF COMMUNISM.

By HERMAN GORTER.

(Continued.)

The small significance of the little businesses becomes even more evident, if we compare the percentage of persons working in the industries, in the small, medium and big businesses.

(As business here means 1-5 persons, a big business, over 50 persons.)

	1882	1895	1907
Small trade	55.1	39.9	29.5
Medium trade	18.6	23.8	25.1
Big trade	26.3	36.3	45.4

We see that, whereas in 1882, 551 out of every 1,000 persons employed in the industries, worked in the small business, in 1907 their number was reduced to 295.

For the medium enterprises, these figures were 186 and 251, for the big enterprise 263 and 454. Perhaps some reader may object here that, although the big enterprise does away with the small one, the medium remains, seeing that, as far as concerns the persons working therein, it has increased since 1895 from 23.8 to 25.1 per cent.

This is quite true, but in order to be done away with, it had to come into existence first. A medium enterprise often is the transition from the small to the big one. But does the medium business retain its place in those industries where in 1895 the big enterprise was predominant; that is to say, in the mines, the brickworks, the engineering, chemical, textile, and paper industries.

On examining the percentage of persons working in these industries, in the small, medium, and big enterprise, we get these figures:—

	1895	1907
In the small trade	19.1	9.9
In the medium trade	22.9	19.2
In the big trade	58	70.9

Of every 1,000 persons, therefore, the number of those employed in the small enterprise, decreased from 191 to 99, the number of those employed in the medium enterprise from 229 to 192, whereas the number of those employed in the big enterprise increased from 580 to 709. Once the big enterprise is firmly established, therefore, we see that the medium enterprise is relatively ousted.

Of this, the statistics relating to Belgium give another clear proof. There we get for:

	1897	1907
Trades with 1 to 5 persons	215,400	211,700
" " 5 to 50 persons	13,800	13,000
" " 50 to 500 persons	2,000	1,465
" " over 500 persons	133	184

Everywhere we see a decrease in the number of enterprises, except for the gigantic businesses, which increased immensely.

England, in the principal industries, presents the same picture.

From 1880-1904, the number of paper-mills in England decreased from 340 to 297, the tin-plate works from 96 in 1885, to 74 in 1906, the number of blast-furnaces from 629 to 369, whilst the pig-iron production increased from 6,000,000 to 10,000,000 tons. We see that, whereas the number of blast-furnaces decreased, the production increased immensely. *The trades decreased in number, and increased in size and extent.*

This is even more clearly demonstrated by the following table* regarding the United States of America:—

		Number of Trades	Average Capital in 1,000 dols.
Agricultural implements in	1880	1,943	81
" " " "	1900	715	221
Shoe factories " "	1880	1,959	22
" " " "	1900	1,600	64
Iron and Steel " "	1880	699	295
" " " "	1900	668	858
Leather production	1880	5,628	18
" " " "	1900	1,306	133
Breweries and distilleries	1880	2,191	42
" " " "	1900	1,509	275
Shipbuilding	1880	2,188	10
" " " "	1900	1,116	69
Woollens	1880	1,990	48
" " " "	1900	1,035	120
Carpet-weaving	1880	195	110
" " " "	1900	133	334
Cotton mills	1880	1,240	—
" " " "	1900	973	—

The U.S. report on professional statistics observes with regard to this: "The small cotton mills of 50 years ago, with only a few hundred spools, have given way to huge factories, organised according to the principles of modern industrial development in which thousands of spools

have been so perfected, as to guarantee a speed of 5,000 to 10,000 revolutions per minute."

Seeing that in all countries the big trade is becoming all-predominant, and with the above figures in view, we can safely declare: **LABOUR IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE CONCENTRATED IN BIG ENTERPRISES.**

This, of course, is the case to a far greater extent in a branch of industry which, so far, we have not mentioned: the railway. There, one company employs tens of thousands of workers.

There, a body like the Prussian State Railways, has a staff of 500,000 men. Think of the old coach, with its one driver, and one conductor! Compare steamship companies like the Norddeutsche Lloyd of Hamburg (before the war), with its hundreds of steamers, its tens of thousands of workers, its hundreds of thousands of horse-power, with the old sailing vessels, with their crews of twenty or thirty men!

A worker may ask here: But what about the Liberals and the Anarchists, what do they want? Do they not, both of them, say that the small trade increases, and that the doctrine of Communism is a lie? Did I not hear and read that from some of the anarchists? Is all that a lie?

Yes, it is a lie, or rather a distorted truth. And as it is propagated among the masses by means of speeches and books, we will refute it here.

The Anarchists and Liberals cannot, of course, deny our data, the figures speak too clearly. It cannot be denied that there is an enormous concentration of the means of production, alike on the railways, in the mines, in the steel, the textile, and the chemical works.

Nor do they deny it. They try another, more crafty course. In the first place, they give a series of industries, where the small enterprises still predominate. These figures are read and compared, and as a rule, they are correct. At first sight, the unsuspecting reader gets the impression that the small enterprise is still very powerful, and that the Communists seem either to be wrong or to tell lies.

But a closer view shows to what the argument amounts. We see from it, that, as we have already partly pointed out above, those industries where the small enterprise yet prevails, are mainly the following: the rearing of animals, the fisheries, the clothing industries, cleaning, restaurants and inns, horticulture, and the retail trade.

If we further consider, that the clothing industry is carried on through a number of small employers, dressmakers, etc., but that these are for the greater part home-industries, which are completely dependent on some big employer, and are miserably paid. In the small trades also, a large number of dépôt owners, agents, and so on, are entirely dependent on the capitalists. These facts give us an idea how little the figures for the small enterprise are worth.

In opposition to the mines, the ship-yards, the railways, the machine-works, the Anarchists bring forward the restaurant-owners, the inn-keepers, the hairdressers, the small tradesmen! As if Socialism could be kept back by these latter, once the former were ripe for Socialism.

The Liberal Democrats and Anarchists have another trick left, however. In order to refute the extensive and undeniable statistics of the Communists, all pointing to a strong concentration of the means of production in the principal industries, they give the figures of such industries where the small and medium trade are *yet extant*.

Triumphantly they present a list of the small and medium trades, which often does not give the decrease or increase covering a number of years, but provides only a few figures of one special year. And they say: "There, you see, the small and medium trades are still there. They are not dead. The big enterprises have not killed them."

As if it were the doctrine of the Communists, that in a certain year the entire small trade should die out, and only the big trade survive!

All Communism teaches is this: the big trade is becoming predominant, and gradually, as far as the power of production is concerned, it has come greatly to surpass the small trade.

(To be Continued.)

* These figures have been rounded off in hundreds.