

the essential character of the juridical system, forgetful of trade solidarity, in which the workers had to face the great industrial revolution that engendered the immense army of wage-earners.

A few years after the establishment of equality before the law, with which trade solidarity was inconsistent, large-scale industry began to develop.

The machine was substituted for the craftsman's hand labour; small workshops gave place to large factories, which attracted hundreds of thousands, and later on millions, of workers from the country. Thus there was concentrated into the towns an immense proletariat whose livelihood depended solely upon wages.

Large-scale industry, which developed continually, remained for a long time unorganised. It did not know how to estimate the capacity of consumption, and frequently suffered from crises and overproduction. This anarchy in production aggravated competition, rendered the labour market chronically unstable, and led to much unemployment, sweating, lowering of wages, and excessive lengthening of hours of work.

The worker in the big factory, badly paid, unable to save, weakened by exhausting labour and insufficient nourishment, fell into destitution when unable to work through sickness. This was a period of great misery, when there was slowly formed, under the pressure of suffering, the feeling of solidarity which was necessary for the achievement of security against the risks of the worker's life.

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE "LAISSER-FAIRE" STATE

In face of this distress the *laissez faire* State preserved an attitude of indifference. Believing as it did in equality before the law and economic liberty, it elevated inactivity to the dignity of a doctrine. Statesmen and Members of Parliament were fully occupied with political problems; few indeed appreciated the social significance of the industrial revolution which was going forward under their eyes. Thus for a long time the public authorities intervened no further than to distribute bread tickets to the families of workers who were sick and unemployed.

Nevertheless, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, as industrialisation became more intense, the conviction grew that the community itself would suffer in its health, its productive