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Gentlemen:

I am deeply interested in your article "Amsterdam on Capitalism by Stanley High" issue of January 19, 1949, and I am interested in the social and economic well being of the people of the world.

Laissez faire Capitalism is often mentioned in discussions now-a-days, but I have seen no attempt to define it. I, at least, will try to do so. Laissez faire (le'sa fer) (French), freedom to do (as desired); non-interference; the let-alone policy in economics; free reign in industrial competition. Capitalism, the possession of Capital, especially its concentration in the hands of a few; the power of combined capital. Laissez faire, personal freedom and individual liberty is one of the most treasured possessions of mankind, that with the right to work and keep or use the fruit of your labor as you see fit. Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty or give me death." It has been demonstrated repeatedly that people would sooner die than live in slavery. The free and independent use of Capital is equally important to a free people.

Evil No. 1 of your article says, "Capitalism tends to subordinate what should be the primary task of any economy - the meeting of human needs - to the economic advantages of those who have most power over its institutions."

Let us stop and consider how human needs are met or satisfied. Then we will try to learn how those having most power over its institutions turn them to their own economic advantage.

Answer to first question - all wealth comes from the land, or natural resources, placed here before us by our Creator for our sustenance.

Second - those in control of our institutions turn them to their own economic advantage through private ownership of the land which gives man life. If you control the goods which man must have to live, you regulate man's life, just as surely as if he were a chattel.

You say this was "met and stirringly contended with 800 years before Christ." Exodus 3-8, God tells Moses that He has come to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians - into a good land - flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, etc." But, it does not say that the land was returned to Moses and his people. I doubt very much that Justice is satisfied by surrendering to wrong and seeking new territory, but rather to correct the wrong. And, if we in 1949 wished to run away from our problems, where would we go?

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Evil No. 2 - that "Capitalism tends to produce serious inequalities." What is Capital, practically speaking? Capital is the tools, buildings, machines, in fact, all wealth used in the production of more wealth. Interest is the reward or return for the use of Capital. About 1882 legal interest was dropped from 7% to 6% regular interest rates have changed little to date.

Land value in the City of Chicago, Illinois, in 1876 was \$250,000,000.00; land value in Chicago in 1928 was five billion dollars. Where is the wealth we produce going, to pay interest on Capital, or rent on land?

I will let you figure out how much milk a day's wages will buy today as compared with the quantity of milk a day's wages would buy in 1876, flour, shoes, clothes, meat or rent?

What an astounding spectacle, that producers of wealth are everywhere poor and continually becoming more dependent, while non-producers are continually becoming richer!

Why are so many of our people all over the world in this atomic age living at a bare subsistence? We are not concerned with either Capitalism or Communism as a political group. What we are concerned with is how can our people earn a progressively better, free and happy living? Lincoln said, "the proper function of any good government is to give to every worker the full product of his toil, or, as near that as possible."

The Declaration of Independence teaches us that, "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." If this be true then we have an inalienable right to the land that God gave us. Psalm 115-15, Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth. Verse 16, The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

We should be free to use the land, as we are to use the air that God gave to us. The land is just as necessary to life, as the air is. If it were possible to control the air, would you approve? If the earlier Kings and landlords could have controlled the air, they would have done so, and it would be as just and logical as private ownership of land is today. Land and air are both a natural gift from God. Man made neither, man should use as much land as he needs the same as he uses the air.

It is monopoly of land that causes war among nations, as monopoly causes strife among individuals. Genesis 3-19, In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

The Brookings Institute reports that in the United States in 1830 it required the labor of seventy two percent of our people to produce food for the nation, in 1930 it took less than twenty three percent of our people to produce this food, releasing forty nine percent of our people for other purposes. Why then, should our people be in want?

Man should have free access to any land not in use, and he should be secure in all personal property that he produces or justly acquires by the sweat of his face, without tax or other interference.

But, you say, we must provide for government expense, true. Land without people has no value, when two or more people want the same piece of land, they are willing to pay something for the use of that particular piece of land; there land takes value, and the greater the population, the greater the land value, or rent. Society is an entity, that has its legitimate requirements. Society, and society alone can and does create land value or rent to meet those expenditures, land rent should be collected by society and used to defray government cost instead of taking private property for that purpose.

When Peter Minute went to Manhattan Island, he bought it for twenty four dollars worth of trinkets; today, the same land is valued at billions of dollars because millions of people want to use that land.

In this age of specialization few people consume what they produce, but exchange what they produce for goods they need produced by some other person, then the object here is to make the exchange with as little loss in value as possible, the more controls and supervision that we have to pay for, the less we will receive for our own use.

Indirect taxation is a popular method of picking the citizens' pockets. The National Industrial Conference Board in 1937 compiled figures to the effect that 22% of the total income went for taxes. Since then taxes have risen to approximately 50% of the total income and are still going up.

In my humble opinion the most successful method for meeting human needs is first to free the source of all wealth (the land); second, stop support of non-essential work. Establish free enterprise, free exchange, individual liberty, freedom, (not license to violate the rights of others), and security of personal property. Those are a few steps in the right direction. If man cannot meet his needs, or satisfy his desire when given free access to the source of wealth and all he produces as his reward, then there is little hope for him.

Under our present form of government we are free to improve our conditions if we have the ambition and intelligence to do so. Under a dictatorship we would not be permitted to change conditions.

Yours truly,

  
Bob Ritchey.