

EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS

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"The Land Question, viewed biologically, reveals wide horizons and opens doors already half-ajar. Placed on the basis of equal human rights it is nobly destructive, for it spells death to wrongs now hurling civilisation to its ruin. Were free and equal use of natural opportunities accepted as a fundamental law - just as most of us accept, in theory, the Golden Rule - there would be no more territory-grabbing wars. Racial conflicts, now looming up so threateningly, would die of themselves. Free exchange, so essential to international prosperity, would follow automatically, and with it we would shake off those monstrous bureaucracies now crushing us. We should be plagued neither with the multi-millionaire, whose evil fortune is founded on Monopoly, nor with that degeneracy-breeding army of paupers whom Monopoly, first rendering them helpless, drags down to pauperism." (Wm. C. Owen)

TWO KINDS OF TAXATION

The present evil and injurious method of raising public revenue is described by the author of "Progress & Poverty" thus:

"If we impose a tax upon buildings, the users of buildings must finally pay it, for the erection of buildings will cease until building rents become high enough to pay the regular profit and the tax besides. If we impose a tax upon manufactures or imported goods, the manufacturer or importer will charge it in a higher price to the jobber, the jobber to the retailer, and the retailer to the consumer. Now the consumer, on whom the tax thus ultimately falls, must not only pay the amount of the tax, but also a profit on this amount to everyone who has thus advanced it - for profit on the capital he has advanced in paying taxes is as much required by each dealer as profit on the capital he has advanced in paying for goods."

The alternative system advocated by Henry George (Land Values Taxation) is briefly stated as follows:

"The way taxes raise prices is by increasing the cost of production and checking supply. But land is not a thing of human production, and taxes upon rent (land-rent) cannot check supply. Therefore, though a tax on rent compels the landowners to pay more, it gives them no power to obtain more for the use of their land, as it in no way tends to reduce the supply of land. On the contrary, by compelling those who hold land on speculation to sell or let for what they can get, a tax on land-values tends to increase the competition between owners and thus to reduce the price of land."

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(WITH SOME TELLING POINTS)

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PLANNED DISEASE

At the recent Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute, Professor T. H. Davey asked whether medical measures which increase population should always be adopted. He went on to say that one purpose of disease was its action in helping to stabilise a population and to limit it to the size which the natural resources of the country were able to support. Suppression of tribal warfare, he said, resulted in increased density of population, and disease became of major importance as a stabilising factor.

Ignored facts

When learned men ignore facts they are sometimes driven to invent theories to explain phenomena which appear to be otherwise inexplicable. Among the facts ignored by those who attribute unemployment and poverty to over-population is the obvious one that the vast natural resources of the world have never yet been fully utilised. Even in our own little 'overcrowded' island there is an area of land twice the size of Denmark which is underdeveloped or completely uncultivated. Sir R. G. Stapleton, a well-known agriculturalist, gave the salient facts in 1941 as follows: "In England and Wales there are no less than 9,147,000 acres of easily-ploughable poor permanent grass-land ... As well as this area, 4,000,000 acres call for drastic improvement ... and in an area classed as rough grazings at least 2,000,000 acres are capable of far-reaching improvement." Such facts - 15,000,000 acres at home not properly farmed or not farmed at all while a British Government spends £25,000,000 in a vain effort to grow pea-nuts in Africa - recall the words of an ancient writer: "The eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth."

The Design & the Designer

The idea of there being a purpose behind disease; that it is designed to control man's profligate fecundity, is neither new nor true. Strangely enough it is accepted by people who profess

to believe in a Creator who loved humanity so dearly that he sacrificed his son for their redemption. The Rev. T. R. Malthus, for example, published in 1796 "An essay on the principle of population" in which he argued that population naturally tends to increase faster than subsistence, and that this tendency is only held in check by plague, disease and famine. As this theory seems to explain and justify poverty, it is not surprising that it received general acceptance from the privileged classes, and that it still influences thought, even of those who have not heard of Malthus. But that false prophet was answered in 1879 by Henry George in his famous book "Progress & Poverty," in which the author says of the Malthusian theory: "It furnished a philosophy by which Dives as he feasts can shut out the image of Lazarus who faints with hunger at his door; by which wealth may complacently button-up its pocket when poverty asks an alms, and the rich Christian bend on Sundays in a nicely upholstered pew to implore the good gifts of the All-Father without any feeling of responsibility for the squalid misery that is festering but a square away."

But Henry George did more than demolish false doctrine; he pointed the way to the natural solution of the problem which had puzzled economists and tortured humanity throughout the centuries. He showed that instead of poverty being caused by Nature's niggardliness, it was the inevitable result of Nature's gifts (the land or natural resources) being withheld from humanity by the prevailing custom of treating land as private property. The remedy he proposed is known in practical politics as Land Values Taxation. In George's own words it is described thus: "We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community, the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual; and treating necessary monopolies as functions of the State, abolish all restrictions and prohibitions save those required for public health, safety, morals and convenience."

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THE POWER OF TRUTH When Henry George had finished writing "Progress & Poverty" he wrote "The truth that I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance. If that could be, it would have been accepted long ago ... But it will find friends - those who will toil for it, suffer for it, if need be, die for it. This is the power of truth. Will it at length prevail? Ultimately, yes. But in our own times, or in times of which any memory of us remains, who shall say?"

"Progress & Poverty" has been translated into many languages and more than three million copies have been sold. It can be obtained from the "Porcupine" office, 4/-, post-free.

RIGHTS & PRIVILEGES

The Soviet Government recently suggested to the United Nations Human Rights Commission that the following should be added to the proposed international covenant: The right to work, to leisure, to equal pay for men and women, and the right to strike.

For many years economists, politicians and churchmen have sought for an acceptable formula of human rights. Their failure has not been due to lack of will but of understanding - they have confused rights with privileges. All human rights are equal; privileges are conferred by legal laws or sanctioned by custom and are unequal. Until this truth is recognised, repeated enquiries and statements will achieve nothing of value.

The first and most fundamental right is the right to life, and as life is impossible without food and other necessities, and as all such things are produced by labour out of land, the right to life must include the right to use land - to live on it and produce from it all things necessary for health and comfort. Because this fundamental right is withheld and overlooked, claims are made for privileges such as the right to work, privileges which seem to be necessary only because the first human right is withheld. It is assumed that some men naturally possess the power and right to give employment, and that other men are naturally entitled to demand employment. But such a situation only shows that the natural order has been violated. Nature is impartial; she recognises no differences of rank, colour or merit, and gives her rewards without distinction to saints and sinners who fulfil her requirements. She provides storehouse and workshop in the land - natural resources - and only by the application of labour to land can food, homes and other good things be produced. It is because land is treated as the private property of a privileged class, that work is sometimes scarce and wages are low. This ancient and continuous wrong - the Land Monopoly - is the root cause of all the economic ills of modern society.

Other Rights

The right to strike requires interpretation: To refuse to work is a natural and equal right, but to prevent others from working is a violation of equal rights. There are also other natural rights implied in the right to life, such as the right to own the products of one's own industry or skill - property rights. And another is the right of free men to dispose of such property by sale, gift, or exchange, without interference - free trade. When the people - or a sufficient number of them - understand their rights and claim them through the ballot box, the long nightmare of economic injustice and the sin and suffering that result from it will end in a glad new day.