

boots she will carry them in her hand for miles to the fair or the market town, and then put them on to make a fine show with. What got at me when I walked about the slums of Dublin lately were the young women with the waxen faces, the scarlet patches on the cheeks, the pink lips, the shuffling, weary, almost ataxic step, representing Dublin's appalling burden of consumption. They are not the product of bare feet, but of wet feet in broken boots, of insanitary poverty generally.

Easter Week, 1916

When the police were driven from the streets by the week-long struggle for an Irish republic in Easter, 1916, these people came out and began to pillage the shops as naturally as their neighbours a mile or so away pick up cockles on Sandymount strand. Civilisation is nothing to them: they have never been civilised. Property is nothing to them: they have never had any. The priest came and drove them away as if they were flies; but the moment he passed on they came back like flies. Civilisation means "Respect my life and property and I will respect yours." Slumdom means "Disregard my life and property and I will disregard yours." Giving money is no use.

It is like people at a railway accident offering surgical instruments and splints and bandages to one another, when there is nobody who knows how to use them. If you give shoes to a hungry child, it will eat them (through the medium of the pawnbroker) and be just as hungry next week. And the person who gives the money or the shoes, instead of feeling like a scoundrel because the children were in misery, feels saintly because he has played the generous sailor of melodrama.

The Irish Pose

Until we all acquire a sense of social honour and responsibility as strong as our present private family sense (and even that is not very strong in many of us), the children will shock that social conscience in Judge Neil.

I do not object to his showing up Ireland, which poses as warm-hearted, affectionate, impulsively generous, chivalrous, and all the rest of it. I am fed up (unlike the children) with these professions. If the United States, instead of asking its immigrants silly questions as to whether they are anarchists and the like, so as to make sure that all her foreign anarchists shall also be liars, were to refer to the statistics of infant mortality in the country or city from which the immigrant came, and send him back contemptuously if the rate were anything like so infamously high as it is in the slums of Dublin, such a step would do more to call the attention of Irishmen to the disgrace of their annual Slaughter of the Innocents than all the shoes that ever were pawned.

Charity is only a poisoned dressing on a malignant sore.

If we are callous enough and silly enough to let that easily preventable sore occur, the only remedy is the knife; and if it is too long delayed, the knife may take a triangular shape and slide in a tall wooden frame overhanging a Procrustean bed.

Starved children always revenge themselves one way or another.

"I have come to, and discover that it is not really a housing question as such, but a question of overlordship and legal restrictions imposed upon productive enterprise. For example, a man pays 30s. per acre to breed and rear pigs. If he proposes to build houses for the breeding and rearing of human beings, he will in all probability be asked to pay from £25 to £100 and over for the same ground. In addition to this, he has to pay all the higher taxes, while the man who rakes in the enormously added values walks off tax free. In the meantime, therefore, the pig has the best of it. Under such circumstances it is nothing short of miraculous that we manage even to build as we do."—Wm. D. Hamilton in the *Ardrossan Herald*.

THE PHYSIOCRATS*

This twenty-year-old book is a monograph on "the first scientific school of political economy." The believers in the "order of nature," who saw the impossibility of successfully ignoring natural law, to the requirements of which all political effort must be subordinated, were the representatives in France on the eve of the Revolution of the Single-Tax men of to-day. But the Physiocrats, while they were the originators of "*l'impôt unique*," were more than professors of political economy, and Physiocracy, as a political philosophy, is a system which might well satisfy the need felt by a number of half-articulate thinkers of to-day whose complaints will grow louder as the confusion caused by war increases.

Mr. Higgs' study of the Physiocrats is, on the whole, sympathetic, and is, at any rate, so packed with well-ordered information and references that it is an invaluable addition to the English Single-Tax library. The author's own view of *l'impôt unique* is, however, not clear; and an apparent confusion between land and wealth occurring early in the book warns us to be on our guard. In a description of the state of France we read: "The duties levied upon land were so onerous that some proprietors preferred to abandon their property," and, on the same page, "A man was assessed according to his apparent wealth"—this in connection with special taxation; but the only duties on land which are mentioned are feudal dues.

The chief taxes which ruined French commerce and agriculture immediately before the Revolution were taxes on capital and industry, and were three: the *taille*, or poll tax, farmed out and arbitrarily imposed on individuals; the *gabelle*, or salt tax; and the *corvée*, or forced labour system. If any capital remained with the producer, the tolls on commerce and communications prevented its ever increasing. There is no need here to describe the effect. "Young men and maidens refused to marry, asking why they should add to the misery around them."

Amongst the names of those who saw and voiced the approaching ruin we note with interest that of Vauban, the great military engineer, who died of disappointment at the rejection of his protest. But no one spoke to the economic point until the Englishman Cautillon (d. 1734) asked, What is wealth? and began his essay with the words, "Land is the source and material from which wealth is extracted," "human labour is the form which produces it, and wealth itself is no other than the sustenance, the conveniences, and the comforts of life."

A manuscript of Cautillon, whose English works are lost, came into the hands of the elder Mirabeau, who made the doctrine the theme of his first great essay, *L'Ami des Hommes*, a book which took all France by storm and gave him his nickname. There is no English translation, and it is not clear whether Mirabeau formulated the radical solution in this book. He dares, in his preface, to tell the King that he had been falsely assured by his courtiers that the greatness of a prince consisted in the value, and, above all, in the numbers, of the favours he divided among them. He defined luxury as the abuse of wealth, and he taught that in the encouragement of agriculture and in the increase of population and production lay the hope of France's greatness. This was a great step in a country where the only political problem had been how to seize at once for the King all capital as it made its appearance.

Mirabeau's book, in its turn, reached a deeper thinker still. Quesnay was the physician of Madame de Pompadour. He met Mirabeau and, says Mr. Higgs, converted him. Quesnay was at the time writing in the famous *Encyclopædia* the two articles *Grains* and *Fermiers*, in which was outlined the philosophy of the school which was founded by his meet-

* Six Lectures on the French *économistes* of the 18th century, by Henry Higgs. (Macmillan and Co. 1897. 3s. 6d.)

ing with Mirabeau. Much co-operation in writing took place between the men, as Quesnay never published in his own name.

We are now up with the main stream of the movement, and it is interesting to note that Quesnay was led to advocate the taxation of the *produit net*, or rent, of land, not, in the first place, by any abstraction or *a priori* reasoning, but by the practical impossibility of apportioning the *taille*, or poll tax, equitably on any other system. It was the arbitrariness of the exactions of the tax-farmers, rather than the actual weight of the tax, that was killing France, and the man who could tell the King how to collect this tax more economically would deserve well. Quesnay's proposal is stated as follows: "The *taille* should be based upon the farmer's rent, so as to spare the taxation of his means of production, and to enable him to take the *taille* into account when considering what rent to offer for his farm." *L'impôt unique* was to be one-third of the *produit net*.

Of course, the freeing of trade from customs and tolls is of the essence of physiocracy, and it was also held that all taxes, however imposed, were always paid ultimately out of the *produit net*.

Quesnay's mistake, perhaps only a tactical error, in applying the epithet *sterile* to all manufactures as opposed to agriculture is a remarkable feature in the history of economic theory, and it should receive more elucidation than it usually gets. We have not read the original authorities, but it seems that productive industry meant to Quesnay that which produced a *produit net*, a taxable fund. Commerce and manufacture had been taxed beyond endurance, though no taxable fund was obvious, and he proposed to relieve them. The *classe disponible* of Turgot did not appear in connection with manufacture. Hence the sterility. No doubt some rent was overlooked by Quesnay, but it may have been a quantity hard to discern in the circumstances of his time.

The political philosophy of Quesnay is thus dealt with:

Every man, he urges, has a natural right to the free exercise of his faculties provided he does not employ them to the injury of himself or others. This right to liberty implies as a corollary the right to property, and the duty of the State to defend it—in other words, security. The guarantee of security is, indeed, the sole function of the State. To extend it would be to encroach on individual liberty. The State cannot be too strong for this purpose—any constitutional checks and balance of power would but weaken the central authority. The despotism of the State is to be tempered only by enlightened public opinion, which will revolt against any infraction of natural law, or rather render it impossible. The Dauphin once bemoaned to Quesnay the difficulty of the kingly office, which he was not destined to live to assume. "I do not see," said Quesnay, "that it is so troublesome." "What then," asked the Dauphin, "would you do if you were King?" "Nothing." "Then who would govern?" And the laconic answer was, "The law." On another occasion a courtier, seeing the King wearied with the disputes of clergy and Parliament, proposed violent measures: "It is the halberd which governs the kingdom." "And pray, Sir," asked Quesnay, "who governs the halberd?" His adversary was reduced to silence. "It is opinion," added the doctor; "therefore it is upon opinion that you must set to work."

"To what, then, do you reduce the science of government?" asked Catherine of Russia of Mercier de la Rivière (an Ambassador of Physiocracy at her Court). "To study well, to recognise and manifest, the laws which God has so evidently engraven in the very organisation of man when He gave him existence. To seek to go beyond this would be a great misfortune and a destructive undertaking."

Mr. Higgs adds that for the English presentation of this philosophy we must go to Locke. Quesnay has been called the French Confucius, and his teaching on the subject of the virtue of public opinion is reminiscent of the Analects. Quesnay was a member of the English Royal Society, and Adam Smith intended to have dedicated the "Wealth of Nations" to him had he lived.

We return now to Mirabeau, who succeeded to the leadership on the death of Quesnay. "It was his indefatigable industry and ardent zeal that spread the fame of the Physiocrats and their system through all the countries of Europe." The theory of the Single Tax is not the only one on which the fame of the school rests. To Mirabeau the Physiocrats are indebted for the doctrine that taxes cannot in the last resort be other than voluntary, and that their collection should be handed over to representatives of the people themselves; that therefore the King must make himself worth what he costs (for this Mirabeau went to prison), and also for the principle known as the elasticity of the Exchequer—Mirabeau proposed to reduce the salt-tax with a view to increasing the yield. These are doctrines, traceable to the Physiocrats, which are commonplace now.

The next most important name in the history of the Physiocrats is perhaps that of Turgot, who was made Minister of Finance in 1774, who immediately employed one of the group as his secretary, and under whom the Physiocrats were in a fair way to get their policy realised. Unhappily, the change was brought about too suddenly. Turgot fell in 1776, and the influence of Physiocracy declined. Turgot, however, never proclaimed himself one of the school. It was accused of being a sect, and he dreaded the trammels put upon free thought by membership of even so loose a group as that around Quesnay. The Physiocrats never claimed him, though his great work, the "Reflexions," is full of Physiocratic teaching, and his conclusion, "Il n'y a de revenu que le produit net des terres," must have been followed by *l'impôt unique*, though we are not told by Mr. Higgs that Turgot was ever explicit on this point, and the Physiocrats suspected him.

The local habitation of the philosophers was the house of Mirabeau, and on Tuesday evenings, up to the time of the fall of Mirabeau, when the meetings were suppressed, they were at-home to many a distinguished enquirer. Amongst European rulers who were avowed adherents were Carl Friedrich, Margrave of Baden, Gustavus III. of Sweden, Katherine of Russia, Leopold III., Grand Duke of Tuscany, afterwards Emperor of Austria, Stanislas of Poland, Charles III. of Spain, and Ferdinand of Naples.

The literary activity of the followers of the school was centred in the journal "Ephemerides," an account of which publication it was not found possible to exclude from Palgrave's Dictionary of Political Economy (1893), a work which relegates all mention of the writings of Henry George to a postscript separately published. "Ephemerides" was edited by Du Pont de Nemours, the secretary of Turgot. Another Physiocratic writer whose name cannot be passed over was Mercier de la Rivière, the author of "L'Ordre Naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques"; "the most distinct and best connected account of the doctrine of the sect," according to Adam Smith.

The Physiocrats had many opponents, amongst whose names the most famous is that of Voltaire. Where Mr. Higgs can make little of their writings we are sure to fail. Voltaire's attack was witty, but in later years he modified it. Professor Oncken, the historian of Physiocracy, "has stated that even to-day (*sic*) the Physiocratic system awaits its scientific refutation," a judgment with which we shall still agree, though without enthusiasm, even after reading the strictures and faint praise with which Mr. Higgs finishes his generally favourable account.

W. D.

COMPENSATION TO LANDLORDS

To the Editor of LAND-VALUES.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Graham Peace's report (in your June issue) of the Land Nationalisation Conference at the Memorial Hall not unnaturally deals exclusively with the only controversial part of the proceedings.

He poured scorn upon the idea of compensation. Other speakers took the same line, and, judging by the applause they received, their rhetorical efforts were evidently the expression of the opinions of a good many of the delegates. He said that he could hardly imagine that any sane audience would pass such a resolution. In his report he says that "nothing more illogical or unjust has ever been suggested."

The sequel is interesting. After the delegates had heard the arguments against confiscation, our compensation resolution was carried, as Mr. Peace correctly records. It might have been carried by a bare majority, but as a matter of fact there were only three dissentients. Exactly the same kind of thing has happened at all our Conferences. Plenty of applause for confiscation till the cold light of reason and hard facts is thrown upon it, and then always an overwhelming victory for compensation as the only just and practical plan. There were only five dissentients at Glasgow, and only two at Edinburgh. Mr. Peace may, of course, comfort himself with the belief that this only proves that those large assemblies of representative people were not sane. I am content to leave it at that.

As I told the Conference, I would myself apply confiscation, if it were possible, to the direct descendants of the "robber barons," but to class all freeholders as robbers is obviously as absurd as it is unjust.

As a matter of fact, the real difference between us is not on compensation at all. It is not a difference as to two alternative methods of reaching the same end. Our objects themselves are not the same. The Land Nationalisers want public property in land and advocate compensation as the best way, the only way, of getting it. The Single-taxers want private property in land subject to special taxation. On that issue the question of compensation does not really arise.—Yours truly,

JOSEPH HYDER.

Land Nationalisation Society,
96, Victoria Street, S.W. 1.

Mr. Hyder is informing, and we can congratulate him in his attempt to get into line with the spirit of the remarks of Mr. Robert Smillie, President of the National Federation of Miners, and Mr. Hyder's chairmen at his Glasgow Conferences. On that occasion Mr. Smillie, one of the "five dissentients," said:

"I am out to secure the land for its rightful owners, and I do not care how it is taken. To take the land would be neither theft nor confiscation; it would only be the restoration of stolen property. The present owners of the soil had no title to it but that of the sword, and to-day there were other swords and bayonets defending the land which the owners could not defend for themselves. It was not enough to pass resolutions. The Labour movement should take the matter in hand and pass a resolution that unless within three months the land was restored to the people there would be a general stoppage of industries to force the hands of the Government."

Mr. Hyder says with emphasis that at his Conferences, after hearing an odd speaker against compensation, there is "always an overwhelming victory for compensation as the only just and practical plan." The L.N.S., who declare that the landlords must be "honestly" bought out, have fallen on evil days. The policy of compensation to landowners never did have any great vogue, notwithstanding Mr. Hyder's zeal for it. And in the face of the hard facts that the people have fought, and are still fighting, in defence of their native land, the question of buying it back when the fighting ceases seems rather out of date—at least on democratic platforms. Mr. Hyder seems to have his ear to the ground, and so gives a new turn to the argument:

"The real difference between us is not on compensation at all. It is not a difference as to two alternative methods

of reaching the same end. Our objects themselves are not the same. The Land Nationalisers want public property in land, and advocate compensation as the best way, the only way, of getting it. The Single-taxers want private property in land subject to special taxation. On that issue the question of compensation does not really arise."

This looks serious, for "Compensation" has up till now been Mr. Hyder's top note. Has he not told us for a generation that:

"We must buy the land, unless we are prepared to confiscate the money which has been legally invested in land, not merely by rich men, but by hundreds and thousands of working men; individually or through their Co-operative Societies, Trades Unions and Insurance Societies."

What will these poor clients say now to their self-appointed advocate? But the weather is boisterous, and to save the ship this precious cargo must be jettisoned. In other days compensation was the dividing line between the L.N.S. and the Single-taxers, but this no longer counts. The story now is that the Land Nationalisers want public property in land; the Single-taxers want private property in land, and on this issue the question of compensation does not arise.

So be it. Mr. Hyder now takes on a new burden. He must show how much private property in land will remain when the Single Tax takes for the uses of the community the full economic value of the land. Single-taxers are sometimes classed as Land Nationalisers by those who can see that the Single Tax makes for the sure and certain elimination of landlordism. We do not complain.

Mr. Hyder's "only just and practical plan" of compensation would earmark the rent of land for the landowners as interest on the purchase price of their ownership; the Single Tax would apply the rent of land in relief of taxes on houses and other improvements. The one makes for bearing old burdens in new ways; the other for the immediate removal of burdens. Mr. Hyder has great vogue with some Trades Unions and Co-operative Societies. He calls for, or makes them appear to call for, the payment of interest as a substitute for rent; they, on the other hand, call for Government grants for housing, free of interest. It is quite an innocuous farce, but so long as both parties are enjoying themselves, why should anyone complain? The real and abiding "interests" can also join in the fun, the while they continue to make the most of such hare-brained nonsense.

[The question at issue is whether the land should be put under the close control of an incompetent, if not a corrupt, bureaucracy—the L.N.S. method; or whether those who use the land should be left in freedom to work out their own salvation—the Single Tax method. Under either system ("compensation does not arise") it is plain that the rent of land will be taken for behoof of the community. Both the Land Nationaliser and the Single-taxer, like all other schools of reform, advocate their different and differing schemes with a view to the spiritual, moral and intellectual betterment of the people. Land Nationalisation means the maximum of bureaucratic control with what regard to the interest of those who now claim the land as theirs? The Single Tax means the maximum of individual liberty with due regard to the interests of the people as a whole.]—ED., LAND-VALUES.

"Pay ransom to the owner,
And fill the bag to the brim;
But who is owner? The slave,
And ever was, pay him!"

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