

still bemused with the Keynesian-Beveridge fallacies and impenitently determined to repeat the practice. This unemployment problem, what is it but the mess society has got into by permitting the private appropriation of the rent of land, so that pure parasitism exacts its price before there can be any production whatever? And what of the obstructions and penalties superimposed by all that weight of taxation which falls on trade and industry, depriving of their rightful reward all the working people engaged therein, or, worse, shutting down the opportunity to work at all? Have they not a most important bearing on the problem? The cause is obvious and the remedy is clear. In a word, it is to collect the rent of land into the

public treasuries, using the taxation and rating of land values to that end and correspondingly removing the tax-burdens now imposed *on the work of man's hands*—all comprising the wages of labour and the results of industry whatever form they take, in consumable goods, houses and other buildings and improvements, and the rest. Employment cannot be increased nor unemployment cured by the State or the municipality collecting revenue to spend it again on public works. Hopefully, before these experiments have proved fatal as well as vain, the planners will have joined in the ridicule, the world laughing with them. Hopefully, long before then, the command will have been obeyed—remove the barriers!

AUTHORITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

IN the course of his six Reith lectures, broadcast under the above title, Mr. Bertrand Russell in more than one passage hints at the presence of an iron curtain which under modern conditions tends to deny any unorthodox thinker the opportunity of influencing his fellows. Although Socrates was put to death, he observes, this was after he had attracted public attention to his ideas. To-day says Mr. Russell, a Socrates would not be able to make his ideas known. Some readers might weigh the implications of this statement with the fact that the B.B.C. places its enormous resources at Mr. Russell's disposal periodically for six weeks in succession. Every proposal must be judged on the evidence, but if one suspects our civilisation to be on the decline—and Mr. Russell appears to share this suspicion—the change of thought which must precede any revival is more likely, in the circumstances, to start with an unorthodox and probably unpopular minority than those who enjoy the favour of the present rulers of opinion.

These rulers display all the characteristics of Conservatives who have become Socialist without either discarding Conservative habits of mind or acquiring the revolutionary confidence of the earlier Socialists. Under Socialist forms there is the same deference for power and authority, the same reluctance to throw light on the underlying causes of social evils, the same tendency to compromise with injustice, real or supposed. The wicked capitalist is dispossessed—and then compensated. Under a veil of Socialistic protestations the landlords are secured in all their present and some of their future gains, and hundreds of millions of public money are allocated to them for transferring some of their powers of future exploitation to a State department.

In the realm of social thought men have ceased to believe in the possibility of self-reliance; but they still want to do as they like. In a desperate effort to convince themselves that it is possible to depend on the State and yet limit the powers of the State, they are more disposed to give ear to hazy generalizations than to straightforward appeals based on homely facts which plain men can test by their own observation. Those who sincerely desire an explanation and a basis for reform find little comfort if they consult the orthodox, whether Left or Right.

"I am constantly receiving letters," Mr. Russell tells us, "saying, 'I see that the world is in a bad state, but what can one humble person do about it? Life and property are at the mercy of a few individuals. Economic activities on any large scale are determined by those who govern either the State or large corporations.' I find such letters very difficult to answer," he admits. "I do not profess to know how to cure this evil completely."

After re-reading his lectures (which were reported in *The Listener*) we doubt if any of his admirers could answer at once the question: What does Mr. Russell consider the fundamental defect of our society, and what definite reform does he propose? This is not an unreasonable demand. In the case of other social philosophers an answer could be readily given.

Within the limited space of this review we cannot do much more than comment upon the dissertations of such an inconclusive and generalizing speculator as Mr. Russell. He begins by suggesting that human nature is inherently predatory, and competition must necessarily entail conflict. The possibility that men might co-operate voluntarily while retaining their independence seems ruled out. Without any analysis of economic factors he asserts that large organisations must always be more productive than smaller ones. "Short of the whole planet there is no limit to the advantage of size, both in economic and political organisations." The experiences of State shipping and air lines, a comparison of conditions (say) in Switzerland with those in Russia—these and a host of other examples do not appear to disturb his confidence. He admits this (allegedly) inevitable tendency to centralisation makes civilised, peaceful life so dull that he himself can survive only by the fictitious excitement of reading detective stories. We should stimulate the development of individuality, he declares; but he does not tell us how in the circumstances this can be done. The activities of strongly developed characters, however, "are not of a sort that ought to be general," and "too much liberty brings chaos." We are not told how to distinguish the élite in whom development is to be allowed; nor are we informed how the equal freedom of all can enable any one man to obstruct the freedom of another.

At one moment Mr. Russell seems to consider science as an independent power ruling our lives whether we will or no, and then he divides it into knowledge and something he calls "technique," but leaves undefined. The ruthless domination of this technique seems connected in his mind with the assumption that economic competition is a conflict of extermination and under *laissez-faire* all but the rich must starve. "The evils of early industrialism" are attributed at one moment to *laissez-faire* and at another to injustice. But justice has with Mr. Russell an unusual meaning. "No one can deny," he asserts, "that economic justice requires a very large amount of State control over industry and finance." Such economic justice, however, might be "too dearly bought" because it involves economic uniformity in which everyone would be equal and—were it not for modern "technique"—equally poor. "The case against justice

is strong." Progress in the past, it seems, actually required economic injustice, so we must always be on our guard against the dangers of too much justice! Mr. Russell's economic conceptions seem to be built on his axiom that "a man who eats a piece of food prevents anyone else from eating it." Hence justice is not a principle but an elaborate State share-out system which he admits must conflict with our "daily joys, times of liberation from care, and opportunity of creative impulses." His final recommendation, so far as one can summarise it, appears to be a politic application of injustice. "I have sought for a wider understanding of human needs than is assumed by most politicians and economists," he claims. Could any social philosophy be more gloomy or more dangerous than one which teaches us to distrust justice?

As a relief from Mr. Russell's hazy inconclusiveness one turns to any thinker who gives a straightforward answer to the enquiry: What limits the power of Authority over the Individual? Patrick Dove answered this question in 1850, J. S. Mill in 1859, Henry George in 1879, Max Hirsch in 1901, and all their answers were the same: Justice, meaning the equal freedom of each unit of society, subject to natural law, to seek his own food in his own way, subject to the like freedom for all others.

Of these works Mill's *Liberty* is perhaps the best known and (significantly) the least thorough. In the realms of thought, discussion and development of human character and talent he vindicates his contention with arguments which the modern collectivists seem unwilling to challenge; but his final chapter on "Applications" falls short because he omits consideration of the elements of economic liberty. He could not solve this question in his own mind and was honest enough not to pretend to lead others where he could not see clearly. He saw the absurdity of any restrictions upon exchange or production but in his *Autobiography* he confessed he could find no solution of the problem, "How to unite the greatest individual liberty of action, with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour." Mill never seems to have appreciated the Physiocrats' incomplete answer to this question, or to have seen Dove's answer, which tallies exactly with those of George and Hirsch.

"The vice of Socialism in all its degrees is its want of radicalism, of going to the root," says Henry George, and this is confirmed by Mr. Russell's reference to industry "depending upon the expenditure of natural capital," meaning raw petroleum or the inherent fertility of the soil. The natural resources of the earth exist independently of man, who can make capital (or tools, in the widest sense) only by applying his labour to those resources. Mr. Russell may prefer to ignore the necessity of attaching a definite meaning to the terms he uses, but it remains as true to-day as at any time in the past (despite all the application of scientific knowledge, which he calls technique) that man depends for every one of his material requirements (or "wealth") upon applying his labour to land, with or without the assistance of capital, itself a subdivision of wealth. Primitive man could not have survived without access to the land he cultivated with his crude implements; and land is just as necessary for the owners and workers of the most highly developed modern industry. The landlord's notice to quit is stronger under our existing laws than all the technique in the country. Access to land is the first condition for human

life, and every addition to population or step in scientific knowledge increases the value of any site which can yield rent to its owner. Mr. Russell, in failing to take this factor into consideration, has omitted an element of overriding importance to any serious analysis of the problems of society, or indeed of human life.

Hitherto, and with increasing momentum since the break-up of mediæval society, the rulers of Western civilisation have allowed private individuals to monopolise land and appropriate its value, although that value is produced only by the presence and activities of the people, collectively. The social consequences of this robbery by private people of public property have been so profound that almost all the phenomena of social development can be related to them. After the Enclosures of common land, from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries, the destitute villagers were forced to retreat to the towns and under-cut each other in the struggle to obtain employment. The evils of early industrialism were not caused by the presence of industry but the absence of land-freedom. In Ireland, where industry was less developed than in England, the situation of the peasants was worse.

In a free society the possession of wealth cannot in itself confer power, but in a monopolist society, where money can buy the power of exploiting others, there is scarcely any limit to the power of the strongest monopoly. Where monopoly can buy more monopoly we do not find an oligarchy of equal monopolists, but a society in which monopoly tends to become concentrated in few hands. Moreover, as capital is produced only by saving, where few but the monopolists can save, the owners of valuable land will become the owners of the biggest industries.

Little further consideration is required to understand how this domination at the source of all the material necessities of human life entails those consequences Mr. Russell finds so puzzling: the apparent inevitability of mammoth economic units and their "technique"; the apparent conflict between freedom and prosperity for the masses; the paradox that justice seems to involve regimentation so absolute that life is not worth living. On the other hand, it is not difficult to see how by applying justice to the basic elements of social activity, so that man-made law accords with natural law, life in civilised, peaceful conditions may afford wider scope for every healthy aspiration of human nature, and wealth may be as widely diffused as under primitive conditions.

It is true such an application of justice would entail a revolution, though a peaceful one; and a revolution in thought must precede the abolition of so many bad laws. Participants in the enormous octopus of contemporary privilege would actively and consciously oppose the legal changes; that they passively and unconsciously oppose any such change of opinion can be shown by observing the mental atmosphere not only in general but in individual cases.

From Mr. Bertrand Russell's book, *Freedom and Organisation, 1814-1914*, we have taken the following extracts:—

"As regards the analysis of the power of money, I think that Henry George was more nearly right than Marx. Henry George found the source of economic power in land. *This was the view of Herbert Spencer until he became old and respected.* All power to exploit others depends upon the possession of some monopoly. Land is the most obvious. Every improvement in industry, every increase in the population of cities, automatically augments what the landowner can exact in the form of rent. The

men who have most economic power in the modern world derive it from land, minerals and credit, in combination. The conquest of economic power demands as its first step the ousting of the monopolists. The harm that is done by the great industrialists is usually dependent upon their access to some source of monopoly power."

It is difficult to believe that the writer of those words is the same person who now delivers the Reith lectures. The italics in the passage referring to Herbert Spencer are ours. The B.B.C. is undoubtedly a very respectable institution!

F. D. P.

BERNARD SHAW AND HENRY GEORGE

We are pleased to print the following letter received from Mr. NOAH D. ALPER, Executive Director of the Henry George School of Social Science in St. Louis, Missouri:—

"I was indeed glad to see in *LAND & LIBERTY* the letter stating Bernard Shaw's position on the economic presentation of Henry George and that of Karl Marx. The statement from the great wit and playwright usually quoted on his economic position is this: 'I went one night quite casually into a hall in London, and I heard a man deliver a speech which changed the whole current of my life. That man was an American—Henry George. . . . Well, Henry George put me on to the economic tack of political science. Very shortly afterwards I read Karl Marx, and I read all the early political sciences of that time; but it was the American, Henry George, who started me. Therefore, as that happened at the beginning of my life, I have thought it fitting that now at the end of my life . . . I might come and give here in America back a little of that shove that Henry George gave to me.'

"I remember delaying an important engagement to hear the finish of the radio speech here in the United States that was to accomplish this unfortunate objective. I say 'unfortunate objective' because if it was the 'shove' that Henry George gave him that oriented him he had no idea then or later, in what direction Henry George would have him go. And, sure enough, after talking a full hour, about what, I do not remember, he said his brief lines (in a period of time past his allotment on the radio) about Henry George. I felt pretty much put out about his feeble effort to interest American youth in George.

"As time went by I became more and more suspicious of the situation of G. B. Shaw and Henry George. I wondered if we Georgeists did not assume far too much about Mr. Shaw. A few years ago I decided we had 'hoodwinked' ourselves. For G. B. Shaw never said he was a 'Georgeist.' That we could only infer. He said George shoved him, and in his confusion he went for Marxism. If he ever read *Progress and Poverty*, there seems little evidence that he understood it. If he had any concept of economics as a natural law science, he kept it to himself.

"Man of letters that he is; playwright and wit that he is; vegetarian and whatever else he may be, in the field of economic thinking, he cannot be rated with the same distinction. I hope the Georgeists have had enough. I hope they will delete from all their literature and apologise for the presence of all reference to George Bernard Shaw. For any intelligent American who knows the political and economic position of George Bernard Shaw to-day, to lead him to read Henry George by reference to

statements of this man, is unfortunate to the man (for he will not do it if that is where George's ideas lead) and really an insult to Georgeists."

THE B.B.C. AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS

One of our readers has submitted for our inspection a letter he received from the Secretariat of the B.B.C., together with copies of his letters to that body. The correspondence is as follows:—

Mr. X to B.B.C.—January 4th, 1949.

I am making an enquiry on behalf of a local discussion circle at which the subject of broadcasting is often introduced. The query is as follows: On radio programmes concerned with subjects affecting society as a whole—such as trade, industry, land use, education and politics—talks are frequently given by professional experts or specialists, and by representatives of particular bodies or interests. There is, however, an opinion held by a few that on social questions the ultimate responsibility must rest with the average citizen, an amateur representing no profession or particular interest, and realising that he must think these things out for himself, not delegate his thinking to anyone else. Could you tell me on how many and which occasions the Corporation has asked or allowed such an "ordinary person" to make an appeal to the public to think and investigate such questions independently and not under the direction of experts, specialists, etc.?

B.B.C. to Mr. X.—January 11th, 1949.

It has never been the B.B.C.'s policy to suggest to the listener that his thinking on social questions should be left to others, and indeed we try to supply him with accurate information on the questions of the day so that he may be helped to think for himself. I am afraid I cannot undertake to supply you with actual statistics but there have, of course, been a good many programmes in which such questions have been discussed by the ordinary man and woman, for instance, series such as "To Start You Talking," "Public Enquiry," "It's My Opinion," and "Speak For Yourself."

Mr. X to B.B.C.—January 12th, 1949.

It appears that to anyone who might ask "Has the Corporation at any time allowed an ordinary person to make an appeal over the radio to the public to consider and investigate social questions independently and not under the direction or influence of experts, specialists, etc.," the answer would be: No! Furthermore, if it is stated that some of the series of B.B.C. talks have been deliberately aimed at discouraging the acceptance of specialists' views on subjects which preclude specialisation, i.e., the general interest, no specific instance or practical outcome can be cited in support. I am afraid your letter would give me very little assistance in arguing a case against those who oppose the B.B.C. monopoly. I have heard critics quote different bodies interested in specific social reforms, neither hastily concocted nor lacking the confirmation of acknowledged authority, which always seem to escape the notice of the B.B.C.

The above correspondence is timely, in view of the announcement that Sir Cyril Radcliffe has been appointed chairman of the inquiry to be made before renewal of the B.B.C.'s Charter. It is not without interest to note that the B.B.C.'s Director of Talks, soon to be transferred to New York, spent a long time during the war as personal assistant to Sir Stafford Cripps.