

ZIONISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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(Reprinted from the *HERALD* (London) Dec. 21st, 1918.)

Zionism should mean something more than the establishment of an independent State. What we should strive for is not merely a Jewish nation, but a State with institutions excelling those of any existing commonwealth, a benefit not only to the Jews but to all mankind. We should have such a State that throughout the world people suffering from injustice shall say: "See how the Zionists have banished such evils from their country. Why cannot we be as wise as they?" In that way we can make Zionism or Judaism the universal symbol for social justice and righteousness. In that way we can build a State of which Jews throughout the world may be justly proud.

We may take for granted that the Jewish State will be a democratic commonwealth containing all the progressive policies adopted by advanced nations. The Government will not be concerned about political views or church affiliations of any of its citizens. There will be freedom to express ideas on every subject in every way. Suffrage will be universal. The Initiative, Referendum, Recall, and Proportional Representation will make popular rule something more than an empty phrase. But these policies already prevail elsewhere and cannot alone confer a superior advantage. The Jewish State must not only succeed where others succeed; it must succeed where others fail.

Wherein all existing Governments alike have failed in their duty is in protection of their people against poverty. All have tried to alleviate the evil, but none has tried to abolish it. They have established charities that can only give to the poor a small part of what has been previously taken from them. They enact palliative laws, but these do not strike at the cause of the evil. So we find the situation described by Henry George.

"There is distress where large standing armies are maintained, but there is also distress where standing armies are nominal; there is distress where protective tariffs stupidly and wastefully hamper trade, but there is also distress where trade is nearly free; there is distress where autocratic government yet prevails, but there is also distress where political power is wholly in the hands of the people; in countries where paper is money, and in countries where gold and silver are the only currency."

The Land and the Law.

It should be easy for Jews to see the universal cause of such conditions. They have but to turn to the Pentateuch and note how Moses recognised it and provided against it. He saw that, if the land were privately owned, there would arise a landless class, and the landless ones would be dependent on the land-owners for permission to earn their living. Eventually the terms on which such permission would be granted would leave but a bare living to the workers, while all produced above that would go to the idle landlord. So he decreed that the land should not be sold for ever, and provided for a redivision every fifty years. He saw that private property in land cannot be justified like property in things produced by men. So he let it be known that the land belongs to God and men are but strangers and sojourners thereon. The Mosaic legislation would not fit our times. But the underlying principle, the equal right of all men to the land, is one that fits all times and conditions. We neither want nor need any arbitrary revision, but we can provide that the rental

value of land, exclusive of the improvements thereon, be taken for the common use. Then no one would find it profitable to hold land that he did not use, there would be none shut out from the land who would want to use it. Use of land does not mean farming or mining alone. It means all industry. Land is as essential to the conduct of a business in the top storey of a city "skyscraper" as it is to raising vegetables. Not only must the "skyscraper" rest on land and be built of material taken from the land, but the business, whatever it may be, must depend on the use of land somewhere. So whenever there is interference with the use of land, industry and enterprise of all kinds must suffer and, when the use of land is encouraged, industry and enterprise prosper. Business depressions occur when inflation of land values has been carried to the point where prices asked cannot be paid without making industry unprofitable. Industrial stagnation then becomes inevitable. Taking land values for public use would make land speculation unprofitable and thus remove the cause of hard times.

The Single Tax.

It would have another advantage besides. It would in normal times make unnecessary any other taxation. That also would be a relief to industry. The taxation of houses and of tools and material needed in building makes houses more expensive, discourages building, and tends to restrict the number of houses. Taxation of other labour products acts in the same way. The story is told of Mehemet Ali, Khedive of Egypt, that he levied a tax on date trees. The Egyptian peasants at once began to cut down the trees. Had he put a tax on land values instead, they would have planted more trees and destroyed none. This ruler discouraged the date industry and increased the cost of living among his subjects, besides drying up the source of public revenue. Had he adopted the other policy, he would have encouraged industry, reduced the cost of living, and obtained more revenue for the public treasury.

So, when the Zionist State shall be established, let it be understood that the equal right of all the people to the land of the country shall be recognised. To whatever land the new government may hold title, let it retain title, and let those who would use it rent it directly from the State. Let whatever land is privately owned pay into the public treasury a tax equal to the annual rental value, exclusive of improvements upon it. Let there be no taxes of any kind on labour or its products.

Now let us note the result. There would be no unemployed in Zion, unless there should be some not wanting to work. Those holding land having any value at all would either put it to its most productive use, or give way to others who would want to use it. In either case opportunities for employment would be opened to the entire population, and kept open as long as a single human want remained unsupplied. Involuntary poverty would thus be abolished, and with it would go all the vice, crime, and misery resulting therefrom.

We may look for other benefits as well, all of which cannot be foreseen. For example, it may seem at first thought like the wild dream of an impractical visionary to say that the adoption of the Single Tax would be the most important step that could be taken for the conservation of health. Yet that is the view taken by so eminent and practical a sanitarian as Surgeon-General W. C. Gorgas of the United States Army, the man who banished yellow fever and malaria from the Isthmus of Panama, and made

possible the building of the Panama Canal. In a public address he said:

"Sanitation in my mind has been very closely associated with Single Tax. I am a Single Taxer, I think, because my life work has been that of sanitation. Sanitation is mostly needed by the class of people who would be most benefited by the Single Tax. That poverty was the greatest single cause of bad sanitary conditions was very early impressed on me. . . . At Panama the Commission found that in order to attract labour to the zone they had to increase wages, and within a very few months double the wages of the manual labourer. It does not take more than a moment of thought to show how such a measure acts and reacts. Results take place in many directions, but particularly with regard to increasing the ability of the people to live well and get better food and better clothing. While dwelling upon such thoughts as these I came upon PROGRESS AND POVERTY. I was greatly impressed by the theory and was soon convinced that the Single Tax would be the means of bringing about the sanitary conditions I so much desired, and was striving for. It was impressed upon me in a concrete form everywhere, in the United States, in the Tropics, and particularly in Panama, and the great benefit that some such scheme of taxation would confer upon sanitation."

A True Civilisation.

It is the opportunity to put in force the Single Tax and establish a true civilisation that will make Zionism so well worth while. Without determination to take advantage of this opportunity the movement must prove more or less a disappointment. Without the Single Tax the Jewish state at its best will be little else than an imitation of other nations, having some advantages, but afflicted with all the evils that spring from poverty and destitution. Zionists should be satisfied with nothing else than the establishment of an ideal commonwealth and should insist on every measure that will help to make the ideal real. "That ideal," as Henry George said, "is not satisfied with a republic where, with all the enormous gains in productive power, labour is ground down to a bare living and must think the chance to work a favour; it is not satisfied with a republic where prisons are crowded and almshouses are built and families are housed in tiers. It is not satisfied with a republic where one tenant for a day can warn his co-tenants off more of the surface of this rolling sphere than he is using or can use, or compel them to pay him for the bounty of their common creation. It is not satisfied with a republic where the fear of poverty, on the one hand, and the sight of great wealth, on the other, makes the lives of so many such a pitiful straining, keeps eyes on the ground that might be turned on the stars, and substitutes the worship of the Golden Calf for that of the Living God! It hopes for a republic where all shall have plenty, where each may sit under his vine and fig tree, with none to vex him or make him afraid; where with want shall gradually disappear vice and crime; where men shall cease to spend their lives in a struggle to live, or in heaping up things they cannot take away; where talent shall be greater than wealth and character greater than talent; and where each may find free scope to develop body, mind, and soul."

Do not we Zionists want the honour of giving to the world a commonwealth of that kind? Unless we do, the cause of justice for Jews and non-Jews can be better served by confining our work to improvement of commonwealths already existing.

THE DEBT, THE INFLATION OF PRICES, AND MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S PROGRAMME

Two committees have recently reported on the vexed questions of currency, foreign exchanges, the inflation of credit, the increase of prices and the restoration of the gold standard. These are the Committee on Currency and Foreign Exchanges, presided over by Lord Cunliffe, and the Committee on the Provision of Financial Facilities for Trade after the War, presided over by Sir R. Vassar Smith. Their Reports are worth study, although the subject is technical and difficult. It has already been pretty thoroughly thrashed out in our own columns, and we find practical unanimity between the views we then expressed on the question of currency and prices with the opinions expressed in these Reports. A few extracts will suffice to indicate what an artificial financial world we have been living in and what precautions must be taken to reach again a natural state of affairs. Lord Cunliffe's Committee states:—

"It is not possible to judge to what extent legal tender currency [the Treasury Notes] may in fact be depreciated in terms of currency. But it is practically certain that there has been some depreciation, and to this extent, therefore, the gold standard [the sovereign having 20s. worth of gold in it, no more and no less] has ceased to be effective.

"A large part of the credit expansion arises from the fact that the expenditure of the Government during the war has exceeded the amounts which they have been able to raise by taxation or by loans from the actual savings of the people. They have been obliged, therefore, to obtain money through the creation of credits by the Bank of England and by the Joint Stock Banks, with the result that the growth of purchasing power has exceeded that of purchasable goods and services. The continuous issue of currency notes is inevitable in such circumstances.

"We recommend that at the earliest possible moment an adequate sinking fund should be provided out of revenue, so that there may be a regular annual reduction of capital liabilities, more especially those which constitute the floating debt. We should remark that it is of the utmost importance that such repayment of debt should not be offset by fresh borrowings for capital expenditure by the State in many forms for reconstruction purposes.

"It is essential to the restoration of an effective gold standard that the money for such expenditure should not be provided by the creation of new credit, and that, in so far as such expenditure is undertaken at all, it should be undertaken with great caution. . . . This caution is particularly applicable to far-reaching programmes of housing and other development schemes."

"The device of making money cheap by the continued issue of new notes is altogether incompatible with the maintenance of a gold standard. Such a policy can only lead in the end to an inconvertible paper currency and a collapse of the foreign exchanges, with consequences to the whole commercial fabric of the country which we will not attempt to describe. This result may be postponed for a time by restrictions on the export of gold and by borrowing abroad. But the continuance of such a policy after the war can only render the remedial measures which would ultimately be inevitable more painful and protracted."

Sir R. Vassar Smith's Committee point out that "as there is no legal limit to the amount of currency notes which may be issued, there is no automatic check upon the expansion of credit. The very large extent to which expansion has taken place is shown by the fact that whereas the total deposits at the banks of the United Kingdom amounted at the end of 1913 to £1,070,000,000, the amount of deposits is now nearly £2,000,000,000. The enormously increasing purchase power thus created has been one of the main factors contributing to the general rise in prices. The Committee expresses the opinion that it is essential for the reconstitution of industry and commerce to impose