

## Society Psychoanalyzed

By FRANCIS JACOBS

I WANT to try an experiment. I want to examine economic society in the light of today's psychology.

Why is there sweated labour for some and no labour for others? Why, when we seek to improve our homes, do taxes leap up to kill our enterprise? Why are rents so high when so much land is left virgin? What force is at work damming the dynamic energies of industry and agriculture, preventing their harmonious flow?

The source of mankind's life and energy is the Earth. Greek and Roman personified her as the great Goddess of Plenty—Demeter, Ceres. Mankind was nursed at her breast, lovingly tilling her soil to gather her riches, penetrating into her depths to bring up her treasures. And no matter how far he may have wandered from her on his journey into modern civilization, he is still drawing his succour from her. It is his destiny to return always to her. When we die we commit our bodies once again to her care.

I want to try and reconstruct the first psychological crisis of the primitive community.

The drama is set in a fertile valley. Mountains enclose it. The first player is primitive, solitary man. He works all day on the land to produce the wherewithal to live. He lives crudely. His dwelling is a mud hut. He is bound up in Mother Earth. He is the infant. Others wander into the valley and settle on its fertile soil. The little egoist becomes aware of the family. He must become the little altruist.

Now he need no longer work all day. He can exchange what he produces most easily with the produce of other men. His "produce" is his first possession. It can be retained or released at will. By exchanging his possessions, he achieves leisure. There is opportunity for mental development. It is the dawn of conscious reason. Now some are building wooden houses. So he decides to pull down his mud-hut, not without some regret. If one considers the insanitary conditions prevailing in our slums today, one suspects that we have suffered a fixation at the primitive mud-hut level.

Now the first doctor enters the scene. He cures with herbs and is paid in produce. Another is expert at sewing skins; the first tailor is also paid in produce. Produce assumes a new value. It can be exchanged for service. Already man is being weaned from the soil. There is other work afoot. But there are always some left to till it—the farmers—the children. We call them "children of the soil."

As the valley becomes more crowded, *land* gradually becomes an object of possession, an object of love and strife. As the exchanges become more complicated, men

must learn to compromise. They must have laws and abide by them. They hear their first "don't." There are squabbles. So the little men go to the wisest and strongest man in the community; from his wisdom the great man judges between them. From his strength he punishes. He is loved and feared. He is the father of the community; the first king.

But this primitive king is not the wisest and strongest for nothing. He has the finest house and he is the first to stake out a fine piece of land, when land becomes heavily worked in the valley. It is royal, sacred land. It is "taboo." To touch it is death. The little men respect it in fear and love. The great father will devote his time to the community, but he also must live. In return the little men must sacrifice a proportion of their beloved produce, the bounty of their Mother Earth, to the protecting father. A service for a service.

Now a danger threatens the community. As it spreads down the valley, its boundary meets the boundary of another growing community. It is retreat or war. The little men go again for help to the great father. He is growing rich on the service of the community and would not have its boundaries lessened by an inch. It is war. He will be their general. But he will need food and weapons for his army of strong men; so the little men who stay behind must sacrifice a little more of their produce, their beloved bounty. The army returns victorious. The community is bigger and the great man more loved and feared than ever.

But, peace restored, he is no longer giving added service to the community. Will the little men dare to point out that *their* added service should also now be cancelled? The big man is not going to point it out for them. Besides, he now has an army. It is for the little men to speak. Will they accept this burden of added taxation, of added sacrifice, or is it to remain a single mutual tax? The mingled love and hate for the tyrant colour the wish to speak with guilt. Is he not also their protector, their judge, their all-wise, their all-powerful one, their God? The longer the wish remains unspoken, the more guilty it grows.

Yet another factor creeps into the complex situation. The great man is growing old and wishes to ensure his privileges for his son. He boldly encloses his piece of land with a fence. The little men stand speechless before the "taboo." The great man sees their fear and boldly encloses more and more land. The little men, who have already sacrificed so much, are now losing their grip on the beloved Mother Earth. The more they love the land and work on it—building roads and bridges—the more valuable the big man's enclosure grows. And as the inheritors of the land increase in numbers, the land grows more scarce and ever more valuable, their need for it ever more passionate. But it belongs to the father, the king.

How to meet this complex situation? The great father must be killed. Impossible! Impossible to kill the loved one; to entertain the guilty wish for a moment is to wish back certain death on oneself. Fly far from the country? But to the primitive mind there is no world beyond the community and the valley where it lies. To go away into the mountains is death.

Here is the first big decision of the community. Which is the safest and easiest way out? Dismiss it. Bury it. Repress it. With but few exceptions, this is the course mankind has taken. He accepts the situation as a loving dependent. If the services due to him from his king are lessened by a despotic ruler, will he dare demand that the ruler pay back the value of the land in kind?

He has branded himself, in fantasy, slave, and accepted the position of an impotent on the land. As far as he is concerned she can remain uncreative—virgin. His love for her is even turned to distaste. Like the neurotic, he is capable of only a debased relationship with Mother Earth. He pays money to a procurer for the privilege of using her. She is the prostitute. Does he demand anything but a barren return? He has denied his claim to the dynamic value of land.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

For, although the guilty hostile wish is banished, its shadow, its ghost—as it were—lives on in the unconscious, in the fantasy of the terrible avenging lord. The death-wish is projected on to him. He hovers over men like a doom, binding them in fear.

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This type-case can be almost bodily applied to England. In it you can recognize her happy "kindergarten" existence under Alfred the Great, then the Danegeld, which collected an annual £72,000, twenty-seven years after the invasion was over, the Feudal System, the enclosures, and the "rogues and vagabonds" who swept over the country after the enclosures—the nucleus of today's unemployed, our economic impotents.

As the burden of taxation and oppression became more severe, the burden of apparent guilt shifted on to the other side, on to the land-owners. The little man who would not dare to speak in the first place now has his tongue cut out if he dares to squeal. When Parliament might have given him a voice, he could not raise it. If it were raised for a moment, a war was arranged to distract attention from the radical problem, to give scope for increased taxation, and to provide a safety-valve for the repressed hatred—still strong unconscious motives for war. In 1660, the Convention Parliament did actually propose the abolition of Excise Duties, and a Tax on

Land Values. The Stuarts retaliated with the trump card of Rulers—the Divine Rights of Kings. The primitive in man was face to face once again with the painful, ambivalent emotions aroused by the God-tyrant.

With the Industrial Revolution, our amorphous energies were suddenly harnessed to a new dynamo. It was like the coming of puberty to the boy, when the amorphous interests of the child are harnessed to the sexual dynamo. We can see the character-formation clearly for the first time. In England, we see a people already worn out by pestilence and torture. What should have been the greatest boon to mankind, they gratefully accepted at starvation wages and a sixteen-hour day. The great boon was only a source of added profit to the few, and added slavery to the many. Most of all, it has been the means of repressing still deeper the original situation. Housed in his dark slum, his nose eternally bent over the grindstone, the poor primitive has forgotten his gently sloping fields. So the neurosis "grows with what it feeds on."

What can be learned from this psychoanalytic approach to the Land Question? We can see, perhaps for the first time, the full strength of the resistance we are fighting. In the last chapter of "Progress and Poverty," Henry George says "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. If that could be, it would never have been obscured." We can give these lines a fuller meaning.

Beneath the defiant silence of the landowners, the infant is still clinging to its beloved "possessions." Beneath the slavish snobbery of the masses and the inarticulate ignorance of the poverty-stricken, the infant is still clinging to its paralysing fantasies. Beneath the sign "Trespassers will be prosecuted," we can read "taboo," and beneath "taboo"—death.

We see now why men shy away from their birthright like frightened animals; why they slip off the noose for a moment, only to slip it on again under another name—Democracy or Bolshevism; why those with the needed land reform are sometimes doubtful how to proceed; whether they should present the case under this name or that name, whether they should aim at a sudden upheaval or a gradual reform.

We must sow our seed where the resistance is weakest, where there is a healthy discontent with the existing order. The reviling of our opponents is clearly so much wasted breath. The fault, if you can call it such, is more in the oppressed than the oppressor.

Psychologically, the mass of us are still only school-children, and the process of education is bound to be slow. We shall need patience. Ferdinand Lassalle compares the reformer at work to the chemist, when his retort cracks in the heat. "With a slight knitting of his

brow at the resistance of the material, he will, as soon as the disturbance is quieted, calmly continue his labour and investigations."

Our reform can only come through the mass of individuals. It can only come with enlightened education. History, uncensored, must be taught in our schools. Among our teachers, the thinker must replace the sergeant-major. Men's minds must be trained to think deeply and fearlessly. Whenever they think deeply enough, they can find the Single Tax.

A time may come when the mass of men will see their fear for the fantasy it is. Throwing off their burden of guilt, they will throw off their burden of taxation, and rediscovering the debt, forgotten so long ago, claim a Single Tax for a Single Tax. When the land is taxed to its full yearly value, the great monopoly will be broken and the country thrown open for the people. Then will private ownership of land cease to be a source of profit, and a man live only by his labour. Then will there be work for all and leisure for all, and the great energies of the community will flow ever back to replenish the community.

## A Revolutionary Reform

By HON. HENRY H. WILSON

**S**INGLE-taxers are loathe to acknowledge the revolutionary implications of the socialization of rent and rental values. Our feudal economy is built on the privilege of private ownership of land, and all economic values are based on the power of exaction inherent in such privilege. This value has been capitalized and put under the charges of interest, and this capitalization is the depository of thrift, savings and security. It is represented in the assets and solvency of life insurance, fire insurance, and trusts, and in most if not all of private debts, such as mortgages, judgments, etc. Also a large proportion of corporate bonds and stocks may be included. Therefore to destroy the privilege of private appropriation of land values is much more than a shift in the incidence of taxation. A whole new economy will have to be evolved, and we will have to pay a great price for liberty, at least during transition. The reason single-taxers should squarely face the momentous changes, is that these changes, if not known, are at least sensed by the mass of the people, and I have no doubt that the opposition to the single tax emphasizes these changes, while its protagonists dodge the issue, and thereby lose a certain quality of appeal. The Marxists preach revolution of the disinherited against poverty and oppression. The single-taxers proclaim freedom—at a price, and the real work is to persuade people to pay it.

I believe that there are also other tactical errors into which the single-taxers fall, which give rise to a confusion of thought altogether disconcerting to the uninitiated. One of these concerns assessments. With value gone, what is to be assessed? Nothing but the privilege of occupancy and use, and the fixing of the value of the privilege can only be by governmental fiat.

Another error is in referring to unearned increment as a "fund", conveying the idea that it may be drawn on as a checking account. Taxes, or the costs of government, come out of the products of labor applied to land; they are really paid by the pick and shovel, just as rent is paid. The real objection is to double robbery, taxes and rent. The elimination of taxes, by rent being taken as a substitute, is the idea to be stressed. Every dollar the producer can withhold from the landlord and the tax-collector is a dollar for larger consumption and increasing production.

Again, single-tax is not a mere fiscal system. It is a method of determining the source and amount of government income. It proposes to use as the sole measuring unit the value of land irrespective of improvements. With a given sum to be raised, and site values determined, the tax fixes the contribution. This necessarily means a high tax on land, but in most instances, as where land is improved by homes, a lower total tax. The damage done the speculator will be compensated by the opening of opportunity, stimulation of building, and a general quickening of human life.

And finally, the single-taxers fail to appreciate that, in the last analysis, single-tax is a land question—agrarian at heart. As I understand the teaching, when the land speculator and the forestaller of opportunity have been put to rout, then labor may have some measure of choice between working for itself or for another. Where is he to go to work for himself and at what? The only answer can be on subsistence farms—as in frontier days—the new frontier being the land acquired by government through defaulted taxes. If this is not so, then the relief from the pressure of glutted labor "markets" is a false doctrine. Therefore the single-taxers should strive to foster the agrarian—by transferring values to it from the values of the urban—by supporting policies which directly and indirectly render farm life easier and more tolerable, and by taking the profit motive out of agriculture. The field must cease to be the servant of the factory, and we must return the factory as the servant of the field.

To be sure I am suggesting a large order, but I am convinced that it is the task before us.

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