

## HOW PEACE AND PROSPERITY CAN BE RESTORED IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IN EUROPE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

By "TERRA"

The chief object of all wars between nations has been the taking of the whole or part of the territory of the enemy, so as to hold it for the use of the victors.

As all the things necessary for humanity come from the land, this seized territory was a great gain to the victors, and a great loss to the vanquished. So, in every country the possession of land, or in other words natural opportunities, has been a great benefit to those who have been in possession.

As time passed more and more of the earth's surface was seized by those powerful enough to do so, till now every square inch which is worth immediate ownership is owned by some person or State. In each country a few own the natural opportunities of that country, and the many must pay for any opportunity for producing.

The holding up of opportunities in many cases, by those who own them, further penalizes the people and produces unemployment, house shortage, high prices, etc. The country thus punished by this artificial shortage of land, or natural opportunities, must then seek in other places for the opportunities for its people which are denied to them in their own country. Hence the seizure of other territories, disputes, quarrels and wars, because all are in the same plight. Hence, war is caused by the private ownership of natural opportunities, forcing a country to seize external territories, as a substitute for this internal artificial shortage.

Access to natural opportunities is the right of every human being. This is the truth which is so unpleasant to those who hold, and those dependent on those who hold. Until that truth is recognized, there can be no peace, and no prosperity.

If each country will set to work to put its own house in order, there would soon be mutual Co-operation, and international Co-operation would be an accomplished fact. But any country acting by itself, and putting right this vital principle, would gain immensely quite apart from the abstention of others from similar action. Further, others would be forced to do likewise, through the economic effects on them, of such moral action.

As all the inhabitants of a country have equal right of access to its natural opportunities, and as all cannot use them to equal advantage at the same time, equity demands that the value of these natural opportunities, economic rent, should be taken as the revenue of that country, and all other taxes remitted. This is called the Taxation of Land Values. As all must use natural opportunities, and as all do now pay economic rent, its divergence from private to public use would be putting right the wrong which is now committed by letting private persons take that which belongs to the community, and forcing the country to take from individuals in taxation that which strictly belongs to the individual, and which no one has any right to take, until that natural fund, land values, is used up.

The works of Henry George, *PROGRESS AND POVERTY*, *SOCIAL PROBLEMS*, *PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE*, *THE LABOUR QUESTION*, etc., explain in detail the various aspects of the subject. Other thinkers have supplemented his works to make the enormous importance of the Land Question very clear to any impartial mind.

Truth in Political Economy is the reverse of pleasant to the House of Have. It is very hard to admit that the less fortunate have been wrongly used, that they have equal rights, that the deprivation of those rights has caused them to be—unemployed, short of houses,

living in slums, etc. It is a still more unpleasant truth which says that because some have seized these natural opportunities, others must be poor, starving, and, forced to emigrate, that nations must go to war in order to find room for these unfortunates. But so it is. That truth must be faced before there can be any hope of good.

No scheme, no measure, of any kind whatever can have good results until this wrong has been put right. All schemes for the benefit of the people eventually, simply increase the economic rent of land, and thus absorb into the possession of those rich few, that which was never meant for them.

Nations, religions, and individuals have been trying for centuries to solve the riddle of Peace and Prosperity, but the solution has not been obtained, because this truth bars the way. The possessors of natural opportunities will not allow it to be faced if they can help it.

## THE DEAR SCHOOL OF EXPERIENCE

We have building sites, we have building materials, and we have workmen. The workmen want work, they want houses, and we are left with the conjecture why people who want houses cannot use the building sites and the building material to build houses. It is not good enough to say that the workers are not trained. That is no explanation with six wasted years behind us. The fact is that the State and the municipality are up against the same problems as the private builder, and in a worse position to face these problems if they content themselves with trying to supplant the private builder. The function of collective bodies is to see that individuals are not hampered in their enterprise by unwise or unjust restrictions. Houses have been built in other countries by removing the burden of taxation on house property for which there was a clamant demand. All we have set ourselves here to do is to offset burdens on buildings with subsidies. These subsidies are misleading. Those who propose them may not know that the poor get no relief that way. Anything they save in rent of houses has to be paid by them in some other way. Sometimes by increased rates paid by themselves, and oftener by enhanced prices charged by those whose oncosts are increased by higher rates and taxes.

Experience, which, according to Benjamin Franklin, keeps a dear school, will teach the people, sooner or later, that the 1924 Housing Bill is no better than proposals which have already proved inadequate. The figures are unconvincing and mixed. Sums which are separated are inclusive of other sums against which they are put, and deferred payments are mixed up with cash payments. It is overlooked that the housing problem is a poverty problem. We got cheaper bread by taking the taxes off bread; we shall get cheaper houses by taking rates and taxes off houses.—*Wm. Reid in the GLASGOW HERALD, 8th July.*

By HENRY GEORGE

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