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THE CAUSE OF THE WORLD'S UNREST

If we could obtain a bird's-eye view of the surface of our planet " from China to Peru " and the various human populations living thereon, we would surely be struck by the fact that in every country, even the most favoured as to climatic and other physical conditions, and under the most diverse forms of government, these populations exist in a perpetual state of seething unrest culminating at some points in mutual slaughter. We would certainly finish our survey in a mood of despair, as over an insoluble problem and exclaim in the words of the poet : " Every prospect pleases and only Man is vile."

On inquiring into the cause of this strange phenomenon we would probably be told that the cause lies not in external conditions but with the human creature himself ; his natural combativeness, his greed, his selfishness, etc. If, dissatisfied with such answers, we made further investigations, we might reach the basic fact that Man was created with a digestive apparatus as well as with an immortal soul (as though to adapt him for living simultaneously in two worlds) and that a claim had been made on behalf of what has erroneously been called his lower or purely physical self for priority in the order of importance. The legitimacy of this claim had been challenged not only by the more powerful and cunning members of the communities who had already laid hold upon the positions of advantage, but by the moralists and spiritually-minded among them. The alleged " rights " of the stronger as against those of the weaker were, as history informs us, settled by the fiat of the former, and then written into statute-books.

Thus it seems to have come about that human society all round the world divided itself into two sections—the privileged and the unprivileged—the haves and the have-nots—the rich and the poor—the well-nourished and the starving :—two communities with different outlooks on life—different standards of conduct—different motives and aspirations :—and which are now still further estranged by uneasy consciences on the part of the privileged, and on the side of the unprivileged by a deep sense of grievance growing day by day into rebellion and defiance. How much longer will it take for mankind to realize that the root-causes of war lie just here—that all war is essentially class war and that its beginnings can be seen all around by those who have eyes to see them.

Carlyle's passionate indictments of the shocking condition of society are as true to fact to-day as when they were penned : " The proud grandee still lingers in his perfumed saloons or reposes within damask curtains while wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds or shivers hunger-stricken into its lairs of straw." A human society in which contrasts of that kind are familiar elements is already at war—at war with itself, providing just the combustible material that war-mongering and power-hungry politicians require in their " high game of chess whereof the pawns are men."

When considering the case of an individual in distressful circumstances, especially if he is also suffering from demoralization of character, we wisely make careful inquiry as to the influences that have brought him down. When attempting to answer the question " What's wrong with the world ? " a similar precaution is necessary. We may assure ourselves at the outset of our inquiry that the class antagonisms that disfigure the face of society are foreign to its true nature. The spontaneous mutual tendencies in a community of free men are towards co-operation, mutual helpfulness, fraternal feelings and *peace*. Something of an obstructive character must have got among the economic machinery through which these mutual impulses express themselves. " The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way." Who or what was the enemy, and what was the nature of the poisonous seed that was sown among the life-giving corn ? The name of that enemy is Privilege—special privilege in the ownership and use of the earth's resources. The poisonous seed is the assumed *moral* right of the privileged few to exact tribute from the unprivileged many, under the name of economic rent. Its fruits which are perennial, are unwholesome because unearned wealth, and degrading because unmerited poverty.

Can we undo the mischief which the enemy of mankind has thus done, a mischief that has woven itself into the very fabric of society ? Can we up-root this noxious plant and put an end to its disease-spreading influences ? Many social reformers in the long past have spent themselves in valiant endeavours to discover how it might be done, but with meagre and only local results. " The Great Iniquity " had struck roots of a peculiarly tenacious kind, and the prestige and authority that habit and custom generate soon clothed the wicked institution with a sanction that has endured through the ages. To attack this entrenched injustice effectively required evidently not only the driving power of deep sympathy and hatred of oppression, but a keener vision, a stronger grasp of first principles, and a greater power of exposition than had yet been vouchsafed us—and so the world has waited—and waited.

A hundred years ago Henry George was born in Philadelphia, U.S.A. Forty years later *Progress and Poverty* was published, and the light and leading for which we had waited so long came into the world. The book, as those with long memories know, created an immense sensation. Even those who only partially understood its meaning, hailed its author as a prophet. It was translated into many foreign languages and rapidly took its place among the world's " best sellers." Those to whom it was " given " to understand it to its furthest implications felt that a new epoch was opening in the world's history. For Henry George not only saw clearly the knot that had been strangling human life since society first took shape and form, but showed

with equal clarity how easily it might be untied. It was perhaps the very simplicity of the remedial process that aroused the opposition the book had afterwards to encounter ; for it is strange though true that, alike in religion, philosophy, economics, and in the art of right living, the last things to be believed in are the Great Simplicities. If mankind had not been burdened by a deeply-rooted habit of stoning its prophets ; if George's " message " had then been understood and acted upon, we should have been looking out upon a very different world to-day. But now that we know what to do it is surely for us to do it.

An anonymous writer in *The Spectator* of 10th March under the title " The shame of unemployment " writes as follows : " The worst of all tyrannies is the tyranny of poverty, idleness and insecurity. Nothing could more strengthen this country at this moment than that the Government should undertake a frontal attack on this tyranny. The opportunity exists if the Government would provide the leadership, and it could be used to such effect that Britain could face any enemy internal or external without fear. . . . The moral effect at home and abroad would be that one day our Government might well claim that by its example it had saved Europe and the world."

If one were asked to state in as few words as possible, and apart from the logical setting and frame-work in which it was presented, the leading or essential thought in George's teaching, it might be given thus : Cease imposing taxation upon anything that is the result of human effort, and collect your public revenue from the only element of value that will then remain—the unimproved value of the land and all that is in or under it :—then expect to see poverty and want disappear and the stubborn thistle of human nature bursting into the glossy purples of high and noble life.

ALEX MACKENDRICK.

There is no place in the town which I so much love to frequent as the Royal Exchange. It gives me a secret satisfaction, and in some measure gratifies my vanity as I am an Englishman to see so rich an assembly of countrymen and foreigners consulting together upon the private business of mankind, and making the metropolis a kind of emporium for the whole earth. I must confess I look upon high-change to be a great council, in which all considerable nations have their representatives. Factors in the trading world are what ambassadors are in the public world ; they negotiate affairs, conclude treaties, and maintain a good correspondence between those wealthy societies of men that are divided from one another by seas and oceans, or live on the different extremities of a continent. . . . As I am a great lover of mankind my heart naturally overflows with pleasure at the sight of a prosperous and happy multitude. . . . Trade without enlarging the British territories, has given us a kind of additional empire : it has multiplied the number of the rich, made our landed estates infinitely more valuable than they were formerly, and added to them an accession of other estates as valuable as the lands themselves.—(From Addison's *Spectator*, Saturday, 19th May, 1711.)

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Alderman C. Austin Brook was the speaker at the Stoke-on-Trent Rotary Luncheon at the Grand Hotel, Hanley, on 19th April, when he gave the second of his two talks on the Taxation of Land Values.

NATIONAL EXPENDITURE YEAR 1939-40

A Summary and Analysis compiled from the official Financial Statement, White Paper 104 *of* 1939, *helped by explanations in the Chancellor's Budget speech, 25th April,* 1939. *Notes are appended below.*

	£000	£000
1. *Past and Possible Wars*		
Interest and management of the national debt (*a*)	230,000	
War pensions and war graves commission	39,294	
Year's provision for army, navy, air, social and civil defence (*b*)		
From tax revenue	247,738	
Borrowed money	380,000	
(This total " may be more ")	(627,738)	897,032
2. *Cost of Tax Collection*		
Customs and Excise	6,076	
Inland Revenue	9,309	15,385
3. *Subventions to Local Authorities* (*c*)		
General and specific in aid of rates, including for education, health services, police, roads, rate-relief to farmers and manufacturers, public assistance (poor relief), etc.		154,442
4. *Irish Services*		
Including £10,000,000 to N. Ireland Exchequer and £4,000,000 in respect of Irish land purchase annuities		17,200
5. *Certain " Social Services " and Costs of Unemployment* (*d*)		
Old age pensions and contributions to pensions accounts	69,047	
Health and unemployment insurance	72,866	
Housing subsidies	18,465	
Distressed areas and unemployment grants	9,165	169,543
6. *Bounties for Agriculture* (*e*)		
The part of the State aid which includes grants for milk, cattle, bacon, fertilisers, beet sugar, oats and barley ; also some departmental services		16,248
7. *Foreign and Imperial Expenditures*		
Including £750,000 for Colonial Development Fund and £250,000 for Trade Facilities Acts		15,264
		1,285,114
8. *All Other Purposes*		
Works, buildings, stationery, etc.	9,469	
Miscellaneous (including various Government departments) and general administration	22,861	
Civil supplementary estimates including some part for shipping and additional agricultural subsidies	5,000	37,330
Total £1,322,444,000	(*f*)	£1,322,444

National Debt (*a*). The sum of the national debt was increased by £137,000,000 during the year 1938-39. On the 31st March, 1939, it stood at £8,163,289,000. At the end of 1939-40 it is likely to reach 8,600 millions.

National Defence (*b*). The Chancellor in his speech gave a total " in the region of £630,000,000 " and added " it may well be more." If it is exceeded, there will probably be more borrowing. In 1937-38, national defence cost £265,500,000 ; in 1938-39 it cost £400,000,000 ; in three years not less than 1,295 millions. The amount to be raised in 1939-40 by loan (380 millions) is in the Chancellor's speech, although the financial statement names a figure of 342½ millions.

Local Authorities and Local Taxation (*c*). In the year 1938-39 the estimated amount derived from local rates was £210,104,000 (compare £163,678,000 in 1932-33, the lowest since 1929-30) so that receiving £154,442,000 as their " dole " from the Treasury, the local authorities have a total revenue of £364,546,000. The whole of