

thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. It is not enough that we are truthful; we must cherish and carry out high purposes to be truthful about. Read not *The Times*. Read the Eternities. Conventionalities are at length as bad as impurities. Is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life?"

With his cheerful, courageous disposition Thoreau might have lived a tranquil life—provided he could have compromised with the shams and duplicities of society to the extent that even a good man like his friend, Emerson, was ready to compromise. But of this Thoreau was incapable. He found himself the subject of a government which legalised slavery and, in Mexico, waged an aggressive war. To condemn injustice by speech, to pass resolutions, to petition authorities—and then to obey the law; this seemed to him a betrayal of one's conscience. He boldly asserted the duty of civil disobedience. The common reverence for authority was in reality a weakness not a virtue. After all, this thing called government was even at its best no more than an "expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone. Government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of the way. Trade and commerce, if they were not made of india-rubber, would never manage to bounce over the obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way; and if one were to judge these men wholly by the effect of their actions and not partially by their intentions, they would deserve to be classed and punished with those mischievous persons who put obstructions on the railroads."

He found that there were thousands "*in opinion* opposed to slavery and the war, and yet, in effect, *doing* nothing to put an end to them." These men were ready to "wait, well disposed, for others to remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret." But, said Thoreau, "if the injustice is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. For eighteen hundred years the New Testament has been written; yet where is the legislator who has wisdom and practical talent enough to avail himself of the light which it sheds on the science of legislation? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognise the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The true patriots, reformers in the great sense, serve the State with their consciences as well as their heads, and so necessarily resist it for the most part."

And so Thoreau was imprisoned for refusing to support, by paying taxes, a government which supported injustice. The acute embarrassment of the authorities, confronted by the resistance of only one man, of known integrity of character and not seeking power, might arouse exciting tactical considerations in the minds of some men of later times. "If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose." It is significant that our own teachers tell us so little of the examples in our own history where reform has come from the refusal to pay taxes.

After Harper's Ferry, Thoreau wrote a *Plea for Captain*

John Brown, which it is difficult to read, even at this distance of time, without emotion. Its influence must have been immense, but the author did not live to see the result. In March, 1862, at the end of a factual letter to a friend, he says, "You ask particularly after my health. I *suppose* I have not many months to live; but, of course, I know nothing about it. I may add that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing." It was his last letter.

So passed this "rash," "crazy," "whimsical egotist."

Where Thoreau touched the distribution of wealth he suffered the disadvantage which all more celebrated philosophers—with one great exception—have suffered: ignorance of a clear understanding of natural law. But, if it remained for Henry George to show how the richest flowering of individual talent and spirit might be developed in harmony with social life, we are not the less grateful for the vigorous, manly, generous integrity of soul which the influence of Thoreau has fostered and maintained. If only we had with us even a small company of men of genius as "rash" as he how much *safer* we would feel!

F. D. P.

ATTLEE, CHURCHILL AND WINDMILLS

The following is translated from VEJEN FREM, the Road Forward, of August 16th.

IN the first World War the "little solicitor from Wales," the half-Liberal Lloyd George was England's great man and he had ability. When the peace came the Labour Party gained strength and (later) England had its first Labour Government, with the brave three-quarter Socialist, MacDonald, as head of the State.

In the course of a few years MacDonald got himself and his party so thoroughly involved in the mess of State Socialism that even his old party colleagues turned their backs on him. That was a pity for MacDonald. He had his attractions and he meant so well. The experiments with State Socialism brought the Conservatives into power.

During the second World War the former cavalry officer, Winston Churchill, became England's strong man. With his raised forefinger, his broad face and smoking his big cigar, he resembles a bold ship's captain rather than the hussar lieutenant which he originally was. But for England he was a good man in a bad time.

After the peace the Labour Party set out upon another go at State Socialism. Major Attlee stepped into Parliament as Prime Minister and took charge. But he could not, any more than MacDonald, prove the wizard and conjure much out of nothing. He makes the same brave attacks upon windmills. He also plays the part of the knight of the woeful countenance. For him it is a personal triumph and brief satisfaction that the Conservative opposition is in the same case and can think of no expedient for England's economic ills than to apply plasters in a slightly different way.

In Attlee's crisis speech in the House of Commons on August 7th there was not one rational proposal, there was no proposal at all except that he was to have absolute powers (that is to say, dictatorship)—for what? Only on one thing was there general agreement, namely, that England, like Denmark, now has far too many officials, hundreds of thousands of civil servants who are merely quill drivers and obstructors of production. But State Socialism, dictatorship and the power of officialdom fit

into one another like hand and glove. There was one other thing; agreement that the land of England should be better cultivated. That is well enough, but it is only so much talk, if nothing is done about the land question, and who among the politicians is willing or able to act?

The last time England experimented with State Socialism—it was then called Mercantilism, in the period when Denmark and other European countries fell under its sway—it was significant how private initiative knocked the bottom out of the system. It was the highly developed contraband trade which forced the hands of the statesmen. Heligoland, which was then an English island, was quite openly a clearing station for the smugglers; it even had its own rates of exchange. It was a black market in grand style. Whole fleets of smugglers' ships came to Heligoland, which unloaded and loaded and distributed goods to many ports. The smugglers became the people's heroes "because they could provide the goods in demand." There is a diverting book from that time written by the English naval captain, Frederick Marryat, *The Three Cutters*: the pleasure cutter, the customs cutter, and the contraband cutter. The author leaves his readers in no doubt as to which cutter had his sympathy. When he wrote that book Marryat was in a high official position and even so his hero was the captain of the smugglers.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR POLITICIANS

IN the September/October number of *The Porcupine*, the Bulletin of the Manchester Land Values League, Mr. Arthur H. Weller makes the following useful comments on some recent speeches and statements.

Mr. Churchill on Free Enterprise

In his speech at Blenheim Palace on August 4th, Mr. Churchill referred to "the capitalist system of free enterprise," which, he said, existed in this country before the last war, and he condemned the Government's controls and interferences. It is said, with truth, that the British public have short memories. Mr. Churchill's speech suggests that the memories of British politicians are equally short, though things are not always what they seem to be.

It was a Tory government (labelled "National") which, by means of tariffs and other obstacles to private enterprise, put an end to Britain's long-enjoyed freedom to trade. It was under Tory rule that private enterprise was first hindered and penalised by regulations and fines imposed on those who produced more food and other good things than Government officials thought desirable, and for selling without permission or too cheaply. And now Mr. Churchill presents the Tory party as the champion of free enterprise and denounces the Labour Government for carrying on the same evil policy. Conveniently forgetting its own record, the Tory pot calls the Labour kettle black!

Mr. Morrison on Individualism and Socialism

Lovers of freedom should not forget the records of their suitors. Freedom will not be won by substituting one party of controllers for another party of controllers. Our lost liberties can be regained and full economic freedom achieved through whatever government an awakened and intelligent democracy may elect in the future.

At a recent meeting in London, Mr. Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council, pleaded for co-operation within industry. Above all, he said, he wanted ways found by which the individual could still count. The

With the progressive fettering of industrial life, the day is arriving when a new crowd of freedom's champions will take the same risks and give ease to the fast-rusting State machinery. Youth will not be content to live on hero-worship. It will be "hats off for the past, coats off for the future." Liberalism calls again, and next time it will not be any half-baked Liberalism.

One hears that Churchill has said of Attlee, that "Attlee is not a wolf in sheep's clothing; he is a sheep in sheep's clothing." Let that go. But what is Churchill himself? It is possible he may return to take hold of the rudder. The remarkable thing England seems to have wholly forgotten is that there was a time when Free Trade rescued the country from the situation in which it now finds itself. But has Churchill, indeed, any other ideas than to tilt at windmills?

Even a windmill has to have more than sails and wind. It must first and foremost stand upon land. The land is the first and last link in all production. And there are more statesmen than the English who need to learn that.

[It is pleasing to see Mr. Björner still active with his brilliant pen. Despite the handicaps of advancing age sorely affecting his eyesight, he is a frequent contributor to the Press. Last month we were happy to convey congratulations to him and Mrs. Signe Björner on their golden wedding.—EDITOR, L. & L.]

individual was too good and too valuable to be destroyed, and therefore, said Mr. Morrison, Socialists pleaded for more individualism.

This, at first sight, is rather confusing. A dictionary definition of Individualism is "a system in which each individual works for his own ends," and Socialism is defined as "a social organisation aiming at the abolition of individual action and establishing community of property." Paradoxes are sometimes used to deceive, as when tariffs were advocated as a means to win freer trade, but Mr. Morrison's plea deserves serious consideration. Perhaps the ideals of Socialists and Individualists are not as incompatible as they are generally believed to be. Few people who call themselves Socialists would accept a social organisation which involved the subjugation of the individual and the expropriation of his property. And few Individualists would approve of the handing over of the Post Office and the sewers to private enterprise. If prejudices were forgotten a programme might be found combining the virtues of both policies, as Mr. Morrison seems to suggest. . . .

Confusion can be avoided only by an understanding of the nature and extent of individual and communal rights. In every field of human activity the rights of the individual end where his "doing as he pleases" begins to infringe upon the rights of others. Real freedom is equal freedom. No man can claim more than this and no man should be content with less. But the barrier of the Land Monopoly which has defied for centuries all efforts to abolish poverty and war will, if not removed, continue to make real progress impossible. Happily, there is a practical and effective policy for its removal—the Taxation and Rating of all the land on its unimproved values, accompanied by the un-taxing and un-rating of industry and homes. This policy would "take for the community what belongs to the community, the value that attaches to land, and leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to him."