

# AN INTERPRETATION OF The Law of Human Progress

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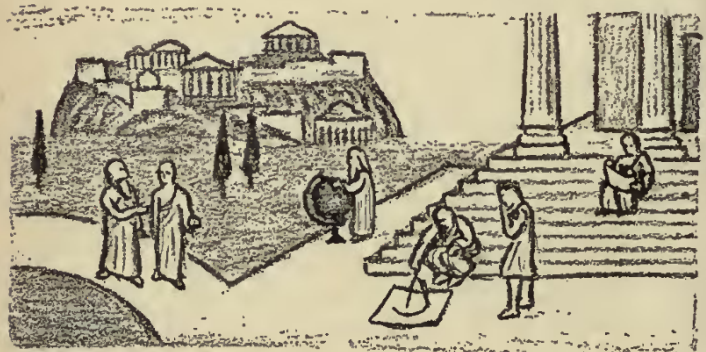
## I. ASSOCIATION



There is a limit to human energy. Progressive pursuits can be engaged in only as time and energy are set free from the sheer act of making a living. Or if any advances are made in the arts of living, further progress can be made only after these advances are first maintained. In the solitary state, man—alone against the forces of nature—can make little progress in advancing the productive arts. He can do little more than wrest from nature a bare existence. There is no time or energy left for progressive pursuits.



As people come together and cooperate, each exchanging his products or services with those of others, every member of the community has access to all the production and services available. Cooperation and specialization of labor make for greater ease of production, more power over the forces of nature, and greater collective security. Such arts as agriculture and building—advances over the primitive state—become possible. Economic activity flows more smoothly; periods of famine and catastrophes are more easily overcome. Thus association is the beginning of progress.



As production becomes easier and life more secure, time and energy are set free from maintenance, and may be devoted to the higher yearnings within man. It is in societies that have the most highly developed association and the most intricate subdivision of labor, that cultural and mental progress make the greatest headway. Thus the flowering of the arts and sciences is rooted in economic cooperation. An added stimulus is the association of mind with mind—the exchange of thoughts. Under such conditions learning and art progress.



Break up association and progress disappears. The advances achieved in society depend for their continuance upon the existence of that society. When society is disbanded, men must soon revert to primitive methods to satisfy their wants. Or if association takes the form of conflict of group with group, time and energy are consumed in non-progressive pursuits, and even pursuits destructive of progress. Thus it is that ASSOCIATION is the first requisite of human progress.



## *"Association in Equality is the Law of Progress" — Henry George.*

### II. EQUALITY



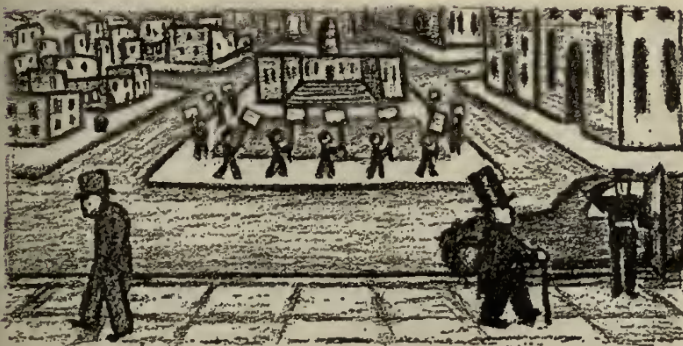
The second condition of progress is **EQUALITY**. Peaceful association is required for progress—and this is maintained only when a condition of equality, freedom and justice prevails. Where the dignity of the individual is respected, and every one receives the full reward of his labor—there the profit motive is harmonious with the common good. Where there is a fairly equal distribution of wealth and power, and where every citizen has an equal voice in the affairs of the community, it is there that men have the greatest incentive to join with their fellow-men in progressive tasks.



There is a tendency in social growth for wealth and power to concentrate in the hands of a few. This is not an inevitable result of progress, but a constant tendency that must ever be watched and checked. It usually comes about from a strong and unscrupulous person or group taking advantage of a crisis or a dissension, and seizing power. It is accelerated by the private ownership of land, and slavery. Power leads to more power, and soon we have two classes in society: the ruler and the ruled; the oppressors and the oppressed.



Once such a condition is permitted to become entrenched, social decline is sure—either in the form of petrification or of chaos. The rulers certainly do not want to change the system that keeps them in power; they want no innovations; progress is a danger to them. And the masses, kept in slavery and ignorance, are too apathetic to desire change. The whole social structure is weakened and becomes an easy prey to ruder forces—men reared under more vigorous conditions. The disinherited masses may even join with the invaders in their orgy of plunder!



Let us take warning. We have the same tendencies in our civilization that have destroyed preceding ones. Already the masses are becoming restive. The great advances made by modern civilization—its discoveries and instruments—are both a menace and a promise. As never before these instruments might be converted into shattering forces. As never before they might be converted into uplifting forces. If justice and equality are established, this civilization may yet be saved. If not—the forces are already in motion that will lead to its downfall and destruction.