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"OUR POLICY"

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—*Henry George.*

DEMOCRACY AND WAR

WAR, it has been well said, is the offspring of fear. This is a true dictum, and the more it is considered the more complete it will appear. The pretext for raising armies and armaments is always defence, and never aggression. It is true that to a small, and often powerful, group aggression may be a conscious aim; but for the mass of the people, who pay for armaments and form the body of a conscript army and who by their votes sanction the business, arming and even war itself appears as a measure of defence imposed on them by the unscrupulous designs of other nations. Every country thinks itself pacifist, and no Government can carry on a war unless it takes the most elaborate measures to persuade its people that it is, or may be, aggressed upon. The idea of aggression is repulsive to the mind of civilised man. Here is the paradox. What is it that makes him fear that other people will do what he is unwilling to do? Two things mainly—race prejudice, and the idea that aggression, though wrong, pays.

A prejudice, as the very derivation of the word implies (*prae-judicium*, before judging), is an opinion formed without reflection—which explains why logical argument is so powerless to eliminate it. It is based on ignorance, like the fear of the child to go into a dark room. The child does not know that there is anything in the dark room to harm it, but on the other hand it does not know that there is *not*. It is useless to argue with the child that there is nothing harmful in that room; you must gently take it and show it positively that all is safe.

Now race prejudice rests on a very solid base of ignorance, supported by barriers of time and space.

True we have within a generation or so seen these barriers greatly diminished by the marvels of modern transport; but they are as real as ever for the vast mass of the people in every land who are too poor to avail themselves of the gifts of modern science. Although the ramifications of international trade are proverbial, little has yet been done to break down for the average citizen the barriers that separate nations. If intercourse with Germany were as easy as between two English counties, prejudice between the two countries would quickly begin to disappear. The main reason for lack of intercourse among the peoples of various nations is the poverty of the great mass of the people. This poverty restricts education to the narrowest limits, makes travel impossible, and so prevents the different nationalities from getting to know and understand one another. Not only does it do this, but it operates to preserve distinctly national characteristics which might be sacrificed without any loss to the world.

Teufelsdröckh, if he had taken this aspect of the question within the scope of his *Clothes-Philosophy*, might have shown that the use of a turban or of chopsticks is a more powerful cause of race prejudice than differences of colour or language. It is the material differences in every-day appliances and customs that make other nationalities seem queer to us, more than differences in ideals, and it is just these every-day things which steadily though unconsciously become modified through commerce and social intercourse. Therefore, if race prejudice is to be eliminated, the economic barriers that keep men poor and restrict international trade must be done away with. As Cobden said: "I see in the Free Trade principle that which shall act on the moral world as the principle of gravitation in the universe—drawing men together, thrusting aside the antagonism of race, and creed, and language, and uniting us in the bonds of eternal peace."

This is the noble vision that inspired the Free Trade movement, and that made it much more than a mere struggle for the extension of trade and commerce. To-day it is still but a vision. We need a much more sweeping application of the peaceful principles of Free Trade than most Free Traders even yet contemplate—the breaking down, not only of all tariff restrictions on exchange, but the breaking down too of all legal and artificial hindrances that restrict production and keep men poor and divided.

The other cause of the fear that produces war—the idea that aggression pays—is much easier to deal with. Many modern writers, and Mr. Norman Angell in particular, have laboured to demolish the contention that war can ever be economically advantageous to a people. Cobden, too, exposed it eighty years ago. If all peoples

understood this argument, then each would at once be relieved of the fear that any other intended to go to war for the sake of self-aggrandisement. But the belief in the economic absurdity of war is yet faint. How can it be anything else, when all existence appears like a battle? The dominant theory of natural selection, survival of the fittest and the Malthusian theory, fits in very well with life as man finds it in the counting-house and the workshop. Competition for orders, competition for employment, the rise of the strong and the trampling under foot of the weak, all appear such firm-fixed and inexorable conditions that it is next to impossible to tell the plain man-in-the-street: This does not apply to nations, they do not need to shove and elbow and encroach on one another. The organised peace movement has tried for many years to tell him this, but he will not listen. Quite naturally. Let it show him how to dispense with the struggle at home, and then he will cease to regard the international struggle as inevitable.

The ultimate hope of peace and all other good things lies in obtaining more democracy at home which will relieve the workers of the weight of the sordid and depressing daily struggle for bread. We who work for economic freedom see our hope of this true democracy, not in abolishing competition, but in raising it to a higher plane where even the last in the competitive race will obtain plenty. We seek to elevate competition to this higher plane by throwing open to the workers the bounties of nature, because we are convinced that sufficient and to spare for every man can be produced from the earth once it is freed from the grip of monopoly.

This view is diametrically opposed to that trend of social legislation which seeks to restrict and regulate competition. But it is right, for the evil lies, not in competition itself, but in the conditions under which it takes place. We are like men on a raft struggling for the last drop of water. To prevent them struggling and to divide the water into equal rations may be a temporary kindness, but it will not save any of them from dying of thirst unless in the end they are restored to the normal conditions of healthy living. So we are all struggling for existence in a world that appears too small. We are fighting and starving and struggling for access to God's bounty while idle lands surround us on every side. Throw open those idle lands to labour and the earth will no longer appear too small. Who will then complain of competition when there is ample opportunity for everyone? Will it not become merely a natural means of helping the human intellect to find its right channel and of proportioning the reward of the individual to the service given to society?

The final object of life is mental or spiritual. All reformers aim ultimately at the spiritual; they wish to cultivate fine, free, healthy emotions, a broader aesthetic sweep, a deeper intellectual vision. But these ideals can never be realised so long as the prime physical necessities—food, clothing, shelter—are lacking. Cultivation of the higher feelings in the over-worked, under-fed, ill-housed industrial workers of Europe is to build a house on the shifting sands; the first breath will blow it away. It is for this reason that we insist on such economic reform as will enable every citizen to obtain a sufficient measure of the first essentials of life. It is not because we are careless of the spiritual that we press what some think a material philosophy, but because we think it the only thing that matters in the end, and because we feel that unless the primary desires for food and shelter are appeased the higher desires of the human mind can never assert themselves.

F. C. R. D.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE SMALL-HOLDER

A scheme to benefit British small-holders and Belgian refugees is being put into operation by a committee of which Sir Richard Paget is chairman. The idea, according to an article in REYNOLDS'S NEWSPAPER of January 10th, is to find small-holdings for the Belgian refugees who have been small-holders in the neighbourhood of British small-holders, so that the latter may have an opportunity of studying in practice the methods which have made the Belgians so famous in this field. Dealing with the difficulties, the author of the article says:

Mr. B. Seeborn Rowntree estimates that if the United Kingdom produced all her own vegetables—and he says there is no reason why she should not—the industry would occupy about 52,776 acres; and on the assumption that one man, with occasional help from his family, could cultivate five acres, additional work could be found on the land for about 10,500 men. But there is another side to this picture, as the same authority shows, and in spite of the extraordinary yields obtained, the recompense of the Belgian peasants is often not commensurate with the severity of their labour. Whilst on the one hand a bricklayer's labourer of Louvain, who has specialised and become famous for the quality of his cauliflowers, becomes relatively wealthy and increases his holding until it covers forty to fifty acres, and in another neighbourhood a small-holder who started on nothing saves thousands of pounds, yet a Liège market gardener says he would rather put his sons in the coal mines than make market gardeners of them, as they would not have to work so hard, and would earn more money. What is the secret of the anomaly?

As a fact there are two secrets. One is that the more the peasant improves his land, the more rent he has to pay for it—the very canker which has ruined our own agriculture. In the neighbourhood of Ghent, which has become famous for its horticulture, land is valued at as much as £800 per acre. At Wavre St. Catherine, near Malines, good land could formerly be bought for £50 an acre, but owing to the industry of the market gardeners it now costs £200 per acre. In many districts £8 per acre is by no means an exceptional rent. This is an evil against which only legislation can provide, and if we are really as a nation to benefit by the opportunity which now presents itself, we must safeguard the fruits of the small-holders' labour.