

LAND VALUES

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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.*

LAND HUNGER

The decision of the Government of India to reserve 178,000 acres of land for the Indian soldiers in lieu of pensions is a strange link between the modern world and the ancient. In Rome under the Republic the soldiers of Pompey and Sulla were given, in addition to such booty as they had managed to pick up in the East, grants of land as payment and pension for their services. These and other instances would afford the philosophical historian material to illustrate the theme of the essential sameness of human ambitions and desires in all times. For, indeed, there is a fundamental resemblance between the *motives* which have inspired mankind in all the ages of which we have historical evidence, though the *means* they have had of putting into effect their desires have been immensely different. There is the greatest contrast between the Roman broadsword and the modern rifle, between the catapult and the howitzer; but it is probable that the causes which have produced this war are in essence not very different from the causes of the wars of olden times.

History has appeared to many of us as a record of the death and crowning of kings and of unsuccessful and successful wars. This is hardly surprising, for the contemporary historian can hardly be expected to think the commonplace round of peaceful life worthy of chronicle as compared with the fears and rejoicings of war. But, in spite of the place that war occupies in the chronicles, it is difficult enough to discover its real causes as distinguished from the immediate instigation or the diplomatic negotiations which preceded it. Dimly across the pages of history we can see migrations of mankind sweeping over the world like great sea waves, sometimes conquering the nations which opposed them and occupying their lands, and sometimes being repulsed and rolling past on another course. These migrations seem to have had their source in Central Asia, which was perhaps the primitive cradle of the human race. Thence they spread westward over Europe, pushing on the weaker races in front of

them. The constant wars of the Romans with the Gauls, Germans, Goths, and Huns were but an effort to prevent that human tide from flooding over Italy. And so, too, in later times, there has been a new tide setting out from Europe for the new worlds of America, Australasia, and the southern part of Africa; and wherever that tide has spread over a part of the world already occupied there has been war.

This migration and bloodshed and struggle has seemed to some simply a world-wide and age-long proof of the validity of the Malthusian theory.

Truly, it has seemed as if the earth had always been over-populated, so that nations when they increased in numbers had either to submit to internal struggle and be reduced by disease and famine, or else must fare forth and occupy the lands of the less strong. But the Malthusian explanation is not sufficient. The world to-day is but thinly and sparsely populated; an immensely larger number of people could live in it in comfort, if not in luxury, than do actually live in it. In ancient times, especially when due allowance is made for the errors and exaggerations of the old historians, the earth was much more thinly populated than it is now. Yet that the people of those times did feel themselves confined is certain, just as peoples in modern times have felt it. And the reason why they felt so is plain; they were oppressed by an economic system which impoverished the mass of the people as much as if their countries had been over-populated. This can be traced quite clearly in the case of Rome. In the early days of the Republic the division of land was fairly equal, and so, too, in consequence, the distribution of wealth. But in course of time the land fell into the hands of a small number of owners. From that time dates the fall of the Roman Republic. The blood of Roman citizens was for the first time shed without trial in the struggle over the Agrarian Law of the Gracchi. The constitution was violated, manners became corrupt, money and not merit became the key to political power, and every attempt to secure for the plebeians a share of their native land was frustrated. Yet for generations the power and prosperity of the Roman Empire appeared to become greater and greater, and her rule was extended by war and violence all over the known world. The landless formed a reserve from which could be drawn armies for foreign conquest. War became a trade, and was followed by the landless "freemen" as the only means of making a living. While foreign conquest was encouraged by the rich as a means of gaining for themselves more wealth and more slaves, and as a means, too, of diverting the attention of the plebeians from the thorny questions of home politics.

In the case of Rome the whole course of events can be followed with clearness, being described in many cases by contemporaries. That the course of history was the same in other countries, about which we have less data, need not be doubted; for what nation of people, free and prosperous, would voluntarily go to war unless aggressed on from without; and what will be the first impulse in a nation of people, starving and oppressed, after they have tried internal reform and found it hopeless, but to extend their boundaries and to acquire fresh opportunities—if need be at the expense of others, for "necessity knows no law."

To the truth of this thesis the whole course of history bears witness. It is the countries where freedom is least and the people are most exploited that are ever

the aggressors. The complexity of advancing civilisation changes the form, but the essence is always the same.

Everyone who has studied the political literature of Germany is familiar with this argument: the population of Germany is growing, the tariffs of other nations impoverish her, the world is parcelled out and colonised by other powers, and Germany needs space for expansion, she must get it, if need be by force. Everyone knows, too, how Russia has desired an outlet to the oceans uncontrolled by other powers, and Austria a greater seaboard on the Adriatic. All these are but examples of the motives that influenced the ancient world.

Economic oppression, the impoverishment of the masses and the enrichment of the few, have produced an over-mastering appetite for fresh opportunities—a land hunger which it has seemed could only be satisfied at the expense of other peoples. And if the theory be true that this land hunger can only be satisfied by appropriation, there opens out to the world a tragic prospect of war and violence. But the theory is not true; there are the best of reasons for holding it to be utterly false; and in any case no one has the right to deem it true until the nations have taken steps to secure for each toiler his share of the national heritage. It is in internal reform that the ultimate hope of world peace lies, not in Hague Conferences and International Treaties.

How little does the average voter know of home politics, ground as he is in the unceasing round of earning a meagre pittance barely enough to support life in decency, and how much less can he be expected to understand foreign politics. Politically free and educated democracies will never sacrifice their own freedom nor aggress on that of others, but democratic government requires more of economic freedom than any people yet has. Yet economic freedom is something worth striving for, however distant it may seem, for in it is the hope of the world.

The political struggles of the past have not been unavailing, for they have brought a large measure of personal freedom and enlightenment. Liberty of discussion and political power is now recognised as the right of every man. But this advance has but served to bring into stronger light the necessity for liberation from economic enslavement. In this country the grosser forms of that have disappeared: the King no longer grants monopolies to his favourites, and exchange is no longer hindered by a multitude of taxes and restrictions. Yet these and other reforms have but touched the fringes of the problem, though they have shown the direction in which the real solution must lie. The Free Trade movement, the Factory Acts, the Small Holdings Acts, and all the other measures advocated and carried by the reform movement, have by their failure to solve the major problem afforded a negative proof that economic freedom cannot be attained by any measure except one that will free the land. William Ogilvie, Adam Smith, Thomas Spence, Thomas Paine, Patrick Edward Dove and others brought forward positive proof that the land question was the fundamental one. Finally came Henry George to prove it by the closest reasoning and by a wealth of illustration, and to give direction to the reform movement of the future by working out the solution of the problem into a definite and simple plan.

The diffusion of Henry George's ideas by himself and his followers has now resulted in a strong political

movement and the formation of a Parliamentary Group, pledged to the carrying out of a large instalment of his plan. The reformers of other times, even those who saw most clearly that land reform was the fundamental reform, must often have been filled with despondency, for the only methods of reform they knew were arbitrary and inadequate. But the reformers of our time should be full of hope, for the solution of the problem has been worked out in all the detail necessary to begin putting it into operation to-morrow. All that now remains is to spread still further the knowledge of these principles and plans among the people, and bring more pressure to bear upon their legislators. When that has been done, as it soon may be, we may begin to enter the promised land.

F. C. R. D.

THE SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVED

By Grace I. Colbron

When you go to the box office of the theatre the attendant or his manager does not ask you how much money you have, does not look to see if you wear fine clothes, nor does he ask what your occupation is. You tell him you want a certain seat in a certain section, and if it is not already disposed of you get it by paying for just what you ask for. And you are getting value for your money by securing just what you pay for.

It would not be reasonable to say to the man in the box office: "I'll take these seats, but if I do not use them I should like to have a reduction in price." You would speedily learn that the management of the theatre could not do this. His business is not conducted on that plan.

NO RIGHT TO MONOPOLISE LAND

The management of a hotel is conducted on the same principle. You pay for a room, you receive your key, but you could not consistently say to the clerk when you go out: "Now, I'll not pay for this room if I don't happen to need it." That room belongs to the hotel system through which a legitimate earning accrues, just the same as the seat in a theatre. If you pay for it, it is your own concern whether you occupy your possession or not, but you have no right to ask a reduction when some one other than yourself could utilise this space at the rate which you yourself do not want to pay because you do not happen to occupy it. It is the same with land values. No one has a right to monopolise land and be exempt from commensurate taxation because he does not happen to be occupying it.

Single Tax is public housekeeping reduced to a proper science, a science that teaches us how to become useful to our fellow members of society. Since man-made laws have built a fence around raw material, the worker must ask of a few of his fellows permission to live, must beg almost for a livelihood. The man who labours and earns his bread in the sweat of his face in fulfilment of the mandate that went out when he fell from grace now gets only half a loaf.

LABOUR BEGS FOR ITS OWN

Labour is no farther advanced to-day with all its appurtenances and mechanical devices, augmented by modern science, than it was in the years that have gone by. Labour itself still stands and begs for that which is rightfully its own.

We send out nurses and doctors and ambulances and hospital corps to cure the wounded on the fields of battle, but we do not stop to consider how much simpler