

PERVERTED INDIVIDUALISM — By Frank Dupuis

IN THESE days of Big Business and Big Unions, of Planners and Bureaucrats, there is little opportunity for self-reliance either in thought or action. Nevertheless, human nature sometimes re-asserts itself against excess, and the well-written pamphlets of the Individualist Bookshop may possibly foreshadow healthy controversy which even the big newspapers will be obliged to notice.

In one of these pamphlets, *The Socialists' "New Order,"** Professor F. J. C. Hearnshaw brings the historian's insight to bear on some collectivist proposals—popular perhaps for the very reason that they are superficial—and exposes fallacies with a directness refreshing after the hazy temporising of so many contemporary publicists. He might have been more persuasive, however, had he avoided all reference to this clash of meaningless *Isms*, and, in the search for truth, started neither on the Right nor the Left, but, in Lamartine's famous phrase, "*Au plafond.*" Such an appeal, to be most useful, must surely address itself not to a restricted circle already half-convinced but to the average man, in average conditions of economic struggle, yet with some desire for a future in which human character may have greater opportunity for free development than before the war.

Professor Hearnshaw's picture of the Old Order, in which, apart from some unspecified "inconveniences and anomalies, the individual was at liberty to reap the rewards of ability and diligence," and in which government regulated and supervised industry so that reward was not secured except in return for some "beneficent service rendered," is in keeping with his explanation that Socialism arose in nothing more than "the envy and jealousy of the less successful" during Victorian prosperity; but it does not complete a picture many will recognize. An argument proceeding from the assumption that the Old Order was well-nigh perfect is likely to incite more readers to search for flaws in his reasoning than to accept his conclusions. Their search might not be unfruitful if they were to follow a method the author himself employs, namely: to suspect that the hazy phrase masks confusion of thought.

Discussing the rewards due to industry Professor Hearnshaw states that "land has been assimilated to other forms of property and has been transformed by the capital and labour of countless generations of cultivators. Hence it too has its just claim to the rewards of industry. The final product of industry is due to the raw materials provided by the land, to the capital provided by thrifty financiers, and to the labour provided by the working man. Each plays an indispensable part and each has his just claim to recompense."

Though land in the last sentence becomes masculine it would be interesting to know on what occasion it was known to plough its own bosom, disgorge coal from its own gullet or even sign a receipt for its just recompense! It is difficult to understand why land and capital are declared practically identical and then shown to be

distinct. If Professor Hearnshaw's clarity most unfortunately deserts him on this crucial matter it can at least be said that haziness on this subject is as prevalent on the Left as on the Right, and in claiming that the community should deal in the same way with land as with capital he has the great body of Marxists on his side. Yet that land and rent, and capital and interest, are distinct in practice as in theory is demonstrated, apart from the testimony of standard economists, by every speculator in a bombed or vacant site, by every assessor where any measure of land-value rating is in operation, and, by implication, in thousands of estate agents' advertisements. By overlooking this question one can overlook the distinction between the true capitalist who contributes to production and the landowner who draws a toll upon it, and can avoid considering if the State by granting one man power to levy a toll upon the production of others is regulating competition in the fairest manner and securing that each obtains a reward in proportion to beneficent service. Professor Hearnshaw reminds his readers that during the era of least "protection" and "planning" wages under "cut-throat competition" rose 70 per cent. With equal advantage he might have mentioned that with the progress of industry land values have risen at an incomparably greater rate. By indicating how this community-created value by every right of property might be collected on behalf of the community instead of privileged individuals he might have shown some of his readers the way to a true individualism they hardly dared hope for.

There must be many who have long watched with misgiving the trend, in our own country as well as in others, away from self reliance. It is uncomfortable to recall the warning of Stuart Mill, that "the worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it. A State which dwarfs its men will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished." But it is not only directly by the State that men can be dwarfed. Where the great mass of citizens are cut off from and made dependent upon others for the raw materials God makes freely available, as well as indispensable, to all men, no sound, healthy individualism can permanently endure. With increasing material progress men will become increasingly dependent. There fallacies will surely grow; to combat these fallacies is of no avail unless it leads up to consideration of the fundamental injustice which makes individualism an impossibility except for the few.

"By the early institutions of Europe, property in land was a public function, created for certain public purposes, and held under condition of their fulfilment; and as such we predict, under modification suitable to modern society, it will come again to be considered."—J. S. MILL (*Essay on Coleridge*).

The value of this paper does not end with YOUR reading it. Your business associate, your neighbour or your fellow worker may not have seen it.

* *The Socialists' "New Order,"* by F. J. C. Hearnshaw, Emeritus Professor of History, London University. The Individualist Bookshop, 154, Fleet St., E.C.4. Price 6d.

MAN'S RIGHT TO WORK

Out on the roads they have gathered, a hundred thousand men,
To ask for a hold on life as sure as the wolf's hold in his den.
Their need lies close to the quick of life as the earth lies close to the stone;
It is as meat to the slender rib, as marrow to the bone.

They ask but leave to labour, to toil in the endless night,
For a little salt to savour their bread, for houses water-tight.
They ask but the right to labour and to live by the strength of their hands—
They who have bodies like knotted oaks, and patience like sea-sands.

And the right of a man to labour and his right to labour in joy—
Not all your laws can strangle that right, nor the gates of Hell destroy.
For it came with the making of man and was kneaded into his bones,
And it will stand at the last of things on the dust of crumbled thrones.

EDWIN MARKHAM.

One cannot hold another down in the ditch without staying in the ditch with him; in helping the man who is down to rise, the man who is up is freeing himself from a burden that would else drag him down. For the man who is down there is always something to hope for, always something to be gained.—

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