

The scientific approach to the question of "rights" discards theological and metaphysical explanations as mere figments of immature minds. Babies are not born with god-given documents entitling them to life and liberty, nor is Mother Nature necessarily kind. Human beings are animals and, like all other members of the animal kingdom, have to fight hard against the external forces or go under. The scientific approach also posits that, if man is to preserve his existence from self-annihilation, he must discard the assumption that "might is right" and live in moral conditions of peaceful equity. It follows, therefore, that conditions must be such that each individual feels he is getting an equal opportunity to draw from the resources of the earth and that no other individual has any advantage over him in this respect. So all men must agree to this principle. Only then can it be said that political law is moral and scientific. To achieve such an equitable state of affairs cannot be done by making an equal division of the natural resources amongst the total number of the earth's inhabitants as the various parts of the natural resources offer varying opportunities, but an equitable division, or what amounts to the same thing, can be made by evaluating the natural resources and dividing the value.

We must, therefore, accept this conclusion: Equity presupposes three conditions:

(1) The recognition that no human being produced the natural resources and no individual has any inherent right to them.

(2) That, unless the law of the jungle is to reign supreme, all human beings should agree to the principle of equal access to the natural resources.

(3) That what is produced from the natural resources should be legally recognised as the property of the producer. Where the community is the producer, as in the case of land values, a communal "right" is established. Where the individual is the producer, the individual's "right" is established.

These conditions would be fulfilled by the application of the taxation of land values, the corresponding abolition of other taxes, which at present penalise producers, and the removal of all barriers to free trade.

It should be emphasised, however, that the question of rights is not peculiar to any one individual or nation. Science is abstract and general and can relate all economic and moral phenomena wherever mankind exists. It should be clear, then, that the more the true conception of "rights" is understood, and the more man conforms his actions to this conception, the greater will be the aggregate of happiness.

FRANK DUPUIS reviews PROFESSOR ROPKE'S

Welfare, Freedom and Inflation

INCREASED interest in the Liberal Party and speculation about its attitude to the Welfare State, now that that concept has come in for more criticism, add interest to *Welfare, Freedom and Inflation*,* by Wilhelm Röpke, "one of the leading Liberal economists of our times." In an introduction to the book Graham Hutton recalls how since 1945 the Western governments, especially in Great Britain and France, have used inflation as a method of stimulating trade and at the same time of providing the means to buy support through Welfare State policies. Now the evils of inflation can no longer be ignored the politicians find themselves the slaves of their own expedient. Mr. Hutton compares this with the wiser policy of the government of post-war Germany, to whom Professor Röpke is an adviser, and therefore especially recommends his analysis.

Professor Röpke describes how fear of insecurity led the peoples to accept the slogan "freedom from want" and by looking to the State to dispense this mis-called freedom now find themselves in a prison maintained by "taking from almost everybody so as to give to almost everybody," the weakest coming off worst in the process and all power gravitating towards the organisers of the machine. The State becomes a mere "income pumping system" and within the dull, grey society which it controls all public spirit, brotherliness and generosity are smothered by resentment in the higher and envy in the lower income

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groups. And the effort to provide materials for the miracle-pump leads inevitably to inflation.

In this section the author says many things that will both shock and enlighten those Liberals who panic at words like self-reliance or names like Cobden, associated with the principle. Unfortunately Professor Röpke's striking picture lacks an essential feature of the background: the earlier and infinitely more effective pump which, since land became monopolised, has been silently transferring publicly-created land value into the pockets of owners of valuable land. The Welfare pump is, after all, only a blind but instinctive reaction to a machine constantly making the rich richer. It is difficult to believe that leading economists are really so unaware of this as they appear to be; that they have never noticed the enormous sums obtained for central sites and considered the implications. If only both Welfare pump and tax juggernaut could be scrapped in favour of the simple and natural course of collecting public rent for public purposes! Life might be so easy, varied and interesting! But Professor Röpke keeps to the modern convention of restricting economic investigation to financial adjustment. On this view the land question is outside his province; no juggling with currency or credit can shake land monopoly.

When he comes to consider the essence of inflation Professor Röpke introduces the metaphorical language customary in economics *à la mode* and which make it so