IMPLICATIONS OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

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The production of the atomic bomb was an achievement without precedent. According to the accepted scientific principles of 1900 the bomb should have drifted down harmlessly, there being no known force which should make it do otherwise. Its production involved the cooperation of ten thousand expert technicians, including over one hundred ranking scientists, working at widely separated points. It involved calculations of hitherto unknown forces, with the constant threat of a miscalculation causing a catastrophe. Never before has a secret shared by so many been kept so well.

It is natural for people to imagine that such an achievement should be an important step on the way to the abolition of poverty and war. Unhappily these evils are not to be abolished or even mitigated by progress in the physical sciences or in modes of production, but only by improvement in the general standard of economic understanding.

The last number of "On the Campus" lists 30 major inventions and discoveries made during the period between 1752 and 1934, and remarks: "Yet after all this material progress, the world was in the throes of industrial depression and 46.5 per cent of the families of the United States were receiving incomes of less than $1,000 a year. These 18,358,949 families averaged only $600 annually -- less than $2 a day." Even these figures do not show how desperate the plight of millions of these families actually was. They were completely cut off from any opportunity to provide for their needs by their own labor. Such income as they had was provided by public charity on an unprecedented scale; charity made possible only by adding billions to the pub;ic debt. Without this charity millions would have starved to death.

"On the Campus" continues: "May we expect that atomic energy will do for living conditions what the inventions and discoveries of the past two centuries failed to do? When utilized in peacetime pursuits will it better the lot of the average family? Will it raise above want those who today are able to make but a bare living?

The answer to these questions is, of course, a flat "no". Basic wages will still be limited to what the laborer can produce on rent-free land. Speculation and land-grabbing will still make such land scarcer and scarcer, so that the laborer's wage will be based upon what hecould make under worse and worse conditions. Taxes imposed without the slightest consideration for common honesty will still rob him of a considerable part of that pitiful wage.

Such improvement as atomic power may effect will be due, not to the fact of greater potential production, but to the fact that for once the government has kept an important natural resour

public property. This is a departure from the almost invariable policy on this continent of giving away everything worth while in the people's heritage for nominal considerations to those who make the quickest and most shameless grabs.

One or two per cent of the genius and effort devoted to the atomic bomb would undoubtedly, if devoted to sound economic education, be enough to guarantee to everyone on this continent the opportunity for a wholesome, happy life.

There is no better reason for hoping that the atomic bomb will end war. The invention of the machine gun, which gave the defense a great temporary advantage, later that of the bombing airplane, led to prophecies of the end of war. But all such inventions change only the conditions of war, not the impulse which causes war. As things are shaping, it seems all but certain that there will be at least one more world-wide war, in which atomic bombing will play a part.

The importance of the atomic bomb will, however, in all probability be lessened by the character of the war. Even the war just ended took in part the character of a widespread civil war. In the next war, few if any nations are likely to escape internal conflict. Allies and enemies will be so intermingled that even aviation will be subordinate.

In the case of such nations as preserve reasonable unanimity, those which make greatest use of the single tax principle will possess an important advantage. The cities of Glasgow (Scotland) and Sydney (Australia) differ in population by only a few thousand. But because Glasgow does not tax land, its people are greatly congested; because Sydney taxes only land and not buildings its population is exceptionally spread out. Glasgow is crowded into only one-sixth the area of Sydney. It is evident that Glasgow would be much more vulnerable to bombing of any type than would Sydney. This advantage is apart from that of better health conditions , of the greater vigor and productivity of the people who benefit by the single tax principle. The congestion of the Japanese cities was an important factor in the Japanese collapse.

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