

#### IV

#### WHAT IS PROPERTY?

JEFFERSON was one of those statesmen who used fine phrases, but he applied the principles he claimed and believed in. If he had done so in beautiful generalities he might have been a great politician, but as he translated his principles into action, he was one of the greatest—if not the greatest—his country has ever produced.

Government in which there will be no extremely poor. Then let us say to every man, "With your own brain, your brawn, your energy, your own fortunes under a just government and justice."

Revolution not merely freed his country from a bad government, but that the Constitution itself in itself was the greatest reform and departure from old world forms that had ever been the brain of man. To him the American Revolution was more than gaining independence from England; he knew that there were still great problems. In fact they will continue to arise as long as man beings on this earth.

There is no such thing as perfection. But let us remember, that the solution of the problem of the mother of all monopolies, will make other problems easier.

In his *Jefferson Himself* wrote:

of a perfect democracy, and he was well aware that we must continue the unending struggle to translate it into democratic practice.

He solved the land question, although in his hands it was public domain. It was he who said, "The land is in usufruct to the living, and the dead have no right in it." He affirmed that use was the only title.

In his days he proposed and carried through land reforms that were in those days as radical as those proposed here and now. His whole life he labored for reform by which every fibre of ancient or future aristocracy would be eradicated. He believed in only one kind of aristocracy and that was "the aristocracy of virtue and talent."

His efforts were not confined to glib talk of inalienable rights. He knew that individual rights could not exist without economic liberty. He, therefore, proposed and brought about the abolition of entails and the laws of primogeniture which enabled the great families to transmit their privileged hereditary estates intact from one generation to another. Thereby he brought about a wider distribution of wealth. His proposals, like those we are making here, violated no moral law. Why should the eldest son alone inherit all the land of his ancestor? Why, we ask, should one man hold land out of use, which another needs and which is his moral right to use in order to make an honest living for himself and his family?

Again we refer to Jefferson:

Whenever there is in any community uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on. If, for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be provided to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed.

It brings us to an examination of the question, "What is property?"

Have the laws of property been violated to the extent of violating natural right? We say they have. There is no doubt about that.

A man makes a pair of shoes. "They are mine," he will say, when asked as to their ownership. He is right, for is there not stamped upon them his individuality, his labor, his energy and his ingenuity. A boy catches a string of fish. Some larger boy tries to take them away from him. The small boy will fight for them. "They are mine," he will cry, "I caught them." And he is right. Can any man say the same of a piece of land which was here long before he was here and will be here until eternity after he is gone?

Now our opponents argue, a man possesses a tract of land; he improves it and builds a house on it. Why should he not own it as much as any other property? Our answer is, that he shall own it and what is more, he will be much more secure in his possession under the proposed plan. All his improvements and his personal property—things he has made or purchased with money he has earned—will be exempt from taxation.

And what is of still greater importance—and for which we have been striving all these years—is that we will have more home owners. The large estates will be put on the market or if not on the market the owner will employ labor and capital to make the proper use of the land, in order to be able to pay the tax thereon. Land will no longer be held for speculation. It cannot be held as an article of commerce under the proposed system. Labor and capital need not be used to pay for land, but they can and will be used for the purpose for which they should be used, namely, the production of more wealth.

“Why do we put labor and capital on the same basis?” Because they should be. Capital is nothing more than stored up labor. It only has a greater power than labor when it can be used to tie up natural resources. In other words, when it creates a monopoly.

Labor needs capital. The farmer needs the plow. The plow is part of his capital. The two need a third element which is land. And when land, to all intents and purposes, is free, as it will be under the single tax, labor and capital for the first time will be on an equal footing to work hand in hand.

The fight is not and never has been between capital and labor, but between monopoly on the one hand and labor and capital on the other. And in that fight of course capital, which need not eat nor sleep, can outlast and have the upper hand over labor.

Labor and capital are the dynamic forces while land is the great and only static element in the production of wealth. As between capital and labor, labor is the more important. Before you can have capital, there must be labor to produce it. The human element comes before the material element.

And as stated, when the two have free access to the natural resources, the great reservoir of all wealth, then the wars between the two will cease.

Principles do not change, but as conditions change the application of old principles demand a change. The pressure of population has demanded and is still demanding fundamental changes in the definition of what is property.

In like manner the discoveries of science, particularly in the field of transportation and communication, are demanding a change in the law of property. Legally, he who owns a piece of land owns not only the surface, but everything under it to the center of the earth as well as everything above it. The sky is the limit. This was the law when William Blackstone wrote his commentaries and still is, with certain limitations. But let it be remembered, to his credit, that Blackstone said, there is no moral reason why a parchment should give title to a piece of land.

It can readily be seen what conflicts this ancient definition will lead us to in the field of aerial navigation. If the old legal idea of the private ownership of land is correct then logically those who navigate the air will have to have permission from every landowner over whose land they fly, the same as one nation must obtain permission before flying over another's territory.

If such a right were asserted by private persons, would not everyone denounce it, and call it ridiculous? All would agree that the air is free; that it has always been free and should so remain; and that all have an equal right not only to breathe the air but to use it for travel and to transmit messages. The problems that have arisen and will continue to come up in the future in this field will be far easier of solution when it is recognized by law that all the people should own not only the air but the land as well, and that those who use it enjoy a privilege and franchise from the people's government, and that government has an absolute right to regulate it and demand compensation for its use. Governments, forced by the law of necessity, have already done this to some extent.

Without the land the air is of no value. We have not yet learned to suspend ourselves in the air—or live from the air

alone. We still need a landing field. It has been correctly said we are land animals, and will so remain.

After this war the air will be used more than ever, and its use will increase. To preserve the people's rights to the land as well as the air, which is but part of the earth, they both must be put in the same legal category as the property of all the people. If not, we will have more intolerable monopoly instead of freedom.

We cannot here discuss aeronautics, but we do want to point out that there is no difference in the character of land and air as public property. Both are the gift of the Supreme Power. We cannot sustain life without either. There is only this difference from the pragmatic standpoint, as has been repeated time and again, that private possession of land must be secure. Without it no one would improve the land. For this security which the individual receives from all the people, the one who enjoys the privilege must pay a valuable and reasonable consideration.

In the same manner in the use of the air for commercial purposes, rules and regulations must be worked out so that the people's rights to the gifts of nature are protected. If not, someone will, to the detriment of his fellowmen, be getting something for nothing.

## V

### ALL MEN SHOULD BE LABORERS

WHEN we speak of labor the average person thinks only of those who work directly for wages. Some think only of the labor as represented by the trades unions. Actually however, business men, large or small, and professional men, are laborers.

Justice demands that all men be laborers. By this is meant that all men should really earn what they have. Income that is not the result of labor, of personal effort, in one form or another is unearned. And if not earned someone else was robbed. Those who through monopoly of natural resources—the common stock, as Jefferson called it—have an income, that portion which comes to them without the exertion of their own labor is unearned. And the exclusive possession of a part of the earth, however small, is a natural monopoly. No agreement or trust between the several owners under the prevailing system is required to make it a monopoly.

The contributions that one man can exact from his fellow-men by reason of monopoly is a tribute acquired by duress. Certainly it is not wages. The individual has no more right to it than the pirates of old had to their booty.

Is it any wonder then that the privileged few become smug and self-satisfied; that they consciously and unconsciously feel themselves a little better than the common herd? And is it surprising that they are suspected, envied and even hated by many of their fellow citizens? Does it not create an aristocracy not based on virtue and talent?

No good, however, is accomplished by denouncing the rich and by fuming and ranting against them. Such practices merely create hatred and animosity and solve nothing. The individual is not to blame, except in so far as he is unwilling to help when shown the way to improvement. It is the system that is at fault.

The system by which some have a superior right to the common storehouse of all wealth is the direct cause of most of our ills. Certainly of the most serious ones. It is blasphemy to say that an all-wise Creator so intended it.

It is a problem of the greatest magnitude. It is of first importance—none can equal it. Due to that system, and the failure to recognize and solve it, our government in time of peace was compelled to spend billions in relief work. All of which was fine and noble in its intention, but only temporized with an evil situation.

To do away with this system, which is centuries old, requires the greatest determination of an embattled people. It has so long been a part of our daily life that we have taken it for granted. It has become a habit of untold generations to consider it perfectly right and just. Our loyalty to the sanctity of private property has made it difficult to get people even to listen to the proposal to abolish the present monstrous system.

But now they will awaken to the reality that it is not private property that should be abolished. On the contrary, they will see the light—that it is restoring and giving back to the people which of right belongs to them. And that it will preserve and make secure the right of property to every individual—to all the personal property created by the hand of man; that even the government (except in dire emergency) will not take a part of his personal property, in the form of taxes. On the other hand the land values created by all the people will be restored to them.

We must face these facts; either this or we must continue to tax the privileged to help the underprivileged, thereby creating distinct classes, sanctioned and upheld by governmental action. It must be done right—for nothing is ever settled "until it is settled right."

Blind indeed is he who cannot see the dangers where a government for the lack of a fundamental remedy, resorts to the establishment of classes (which is exactly what we are doing now) and then by force makes one class support the other. True, the support comes ostensibly from the government, but the government must get the wherewithal from some source.

It inevitably leads to regimentation and to totalitarianism with all its concomitant evils. It destroys everything which we have held dear in our American Constitution. It has in it the germs of communism and socialism.

By abolishing the system of monopoly of natural resources, we will remove forever the conditions from which socialistic and communistic ideas spring. Give people an opportunity to own their homes, whether rural or urban, and an opportunity to make their own living, and they will become strong defenders of the inalienable right of true private property.

In time of war there is no sacrifice that our people will not make for the welfare of their country. We have been blind to our domestic enemy. Not to defeat this enemy means to seal our doom.

It is, however, an enemy that you cannot shoot. And it is an enemy that extends special privileges to a class loath to give them up. But our people, including those who are enjoying these ill-gotten gains, must and will realize, that they must give them up, or else be destroyed by them.

Let us hope for the same unity in the fight against want which exists in our fight against our foreign enemy. Then we will be victorious on both fronts.