FOUR REFORMS WHICH WOULD SAVE THE WORLD

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I AM to speak to you this morning upon four reforms, or social changes, which I believe would save our world. To many of you it may seem as though not four reforms, not even forty, would save the world in its present plight. But how did the world ever tumble into such a condition if not because of the neglect of principles and ideals which, if they had been builded into the structure of society, would have delivered us from all the disasters of this hour. Indeed, would have delivered all the civilizations of history from the ruin which has sooner or later overwhelmed them! I refuse to believe that this problem of society is so strangely difficult. I am convinced that certain reforms, certain ways of doing things, would hold society together as firmly as the blue-prints of an engineer guarantee to hold together the structure of a sky-scraper or a bridge. Behind everything, of course, is the understanding mind and the unselfish heart, those elements of human nature without which no progress and no permanency in social betterment can be achieved at all. But, granted this, I insist it ought to be possible to erect a house of humanity which will stand as securely as the famous house in the New Testament which was builded upon the rock. I want to indicate to you this morning what I think the pattern of this house should be.

(1) First of all, carrying out the analogy of the house, there comes the question of foundations. Unless these are strong, there can be no stability for the structure of our dreams. It is because they are not strong, have never been strong, that every society ever builded by the hand of man has sooner or later fallen to the ground, like the house in the Gospel parable which was builded upon the sand. By foundations I mean literally the land—the land upon which we walk, the land out of which we draw our sustenance, the land to which we return, when our days are done, as to the bosom of some mighty mother. Two things are to be noted about the land as factors in the social problem which it presents. One is that the land, as a natural element and therefore a natural condition of existence, is rightly a common possession, to be freely used and enjoyed by everybody. The other is that the land, as a matter of fact, unlike any other natural element—air or water, for example—is private property which belongs only to the few.

It may be well to consider for a moment this contradiction —how it has happened that this one natural element, the land, has fallen into the hands of private owners and exploiters. The air, of course, is available to us all. This is indicated by that vivid and familiar phrase, "as free as air." So universally recognized is this right of common access to and possession of the atmosphere that if anybody pollutes the air with smoke, or chemical fumes, or other noxious vapors, the guilty party can be summoned before a court of law by his outraged fellow-citizens and punished for his offense. The same thing is true of that other natural element, the water. There are so-called water-rights which have passed into private hands, and are now being reclaimed by the gov-

ernment on behalf of the people. But the great mass of the water, in seas, and lakes, and rivers, belongs freely to us all. Nothing gives me greater joy in the summer time than to walk along the shore, and nourish the thought that all this vast expanse of ocean, upon which I look, is the common possession of mankind. My son moors his little boat in a tidal river, without let or hindrance from anybody. Day after day, he sails this boat north and south and east and west, wherever he may choose to go, and nobody says him nay. My neighbors, the fishermen, launch out early every morning and drop down their lines and nets and lobster-pots into the deep, and all the rich treasure of the sea is theirs. But the land! As I turn from ocean to shore, I no longer see land as I see water, but rather discover real estate which belongs to this man, or to that man, to the exclusion of all other men. There are roads, to be sure, built by the state for the public use; there are parks and playgrounds, set aside for the enjoyment of the people; there are state and national reservations, which keep mountains and forests and hunting-grounds permanently out of private hands. But, aside from such exceptions, the land as such belongs to individual owners; and there is no law more rigorous or terrible than the laws of trespass which are enacted for the protection of these owners.

Now, if we ask how it came about that this purely natural element, the land, ever passed out of the heritage of men, we discover the interesting and highly important fact that, while it is easy to seize and hold the earth, nobody has ever found a way of seizing and holding the air, or the water. When the aeroplanes appeared, to be sure, an endeavor was made to establish the right of a land-owner to all the air that rests upon his acres; and to a certain extent this land-owner

has secured control of enough of this air to prevent invasion of the first hundred or so feet above his dwelling. But there were those who claimed that the whole vast column of the atmosphere which arose inside the borders of their land, up, up to the very ramparts of heaven, was all their own. This, of course, was preposterous—but preposterous only because there was no way of enforcing the claim. So the air remains free, with aeroplanes coursing like birds to the far points of the horizon. During the Great War, the Kaiser's government undertook to seize a portion of the Atlantic Ocean, the English Channel and the North Sea, and hold it for its own. It marked out on the map, in other words, a vast area of water, west of the continent and south of Britain, and announced that no ship of any nation could enter this area except at peril of being sunk by German submarines. But this fiat accomplished nothing, except to give the United States an excuse for joining the Allies and bringing victory to their arms. No, there has never been found a way of monopolizing air and sea. If there had been, you and I would be paying tribute at this moment to some private owner for the air with which we fill our lungs, as already we pay tribute to a private owner for the gas with which we fill the tanks of our automobiles; and ships, as they crossed the ocean, would pass only by the permission, richly bought, of those who owned the waves. What has proved to be impossible with other elements, however, is easy with the land. Very early men discovered that they could fence in the land for the private possession of kings and conquerors. Through all ages this business of seizing territory and shutting it off from human occupancy and use has gone merrily on, to the end of the enslavement of mankind. Who can ever forget the famous

fencing in of the English commons, when the lords invaded the villages and seized for their own use the lands which from time immemorial had been preserved for the grazing of the flocks and herds of the inhabitants? The "commons"—what a significant and noble word, as indicating the common possession and use of this earth which belongs to all as the common heritage from God! And "lords"—changed now into "land-lords," who rule this earth which by their power they have made their own! In this one historical episode in England we have the epitome and we have the picture of all that has happened since the beginning of the world with land, which was seized because it *could* be seized and held because it *could* be held.

The fundamental injustice of this private ownership of land has been recognized by all the prophets and teachers of mankind. "The land shall not be sold," saith the Lord, "for the land is mine."* And what is unjust, of course, is certain to be socially disastrous. For if society is composed of people, then a society wherein the people have no access to the land, no place upon which to stand and work, is obviously a society which has no foundation. If it were not for the fact that we have developed a system of tribute—rent, as it is called!—which enables people to occupy and cultivate land which is not their own, we should still be living in the tribal stage of social evolution, when men wandered here and there over the face of the earth, because they literally had no place to lay their heads. Such a foundation of society, if I may call it such, is a foundation of mere sand, which shifts and turns at every passing wind of circumstance and thus in the end brings civilization tumbling to the ground.

*Leviticus 25

All this is obvious. But what can be done about it at this advanced stage of human history? We can't take the land away from persons whose titles run back centuries into the past. We can't do in our complicated society what the Jews did in their primitive tribal existence—declare every fifty years a year of Jubilee, in which all land shall revert to its original condition. There isn't money enough in the world to buy back the land from private to public hands. Even President Roosevelt, who can apparently find money for anything, might find it difficult to gather enough money together to buy even Manhattan Island, to say nothing of the rest of the country. What can we do?

It is this dilemma which has baffled practically every thinker who has grappled with this problem of the land. It baffled even so great and comprehensive a thinker as Herbert Spencer. This philosopher recognized the essential injustice of the existing system; no man ever wrote against it more effectively than he did in his early days. But when he came to suggest a remedy, he threw up his hands in despair. Better adapt ourselves as best we can, he said, to the present iniquity, than to resort to still greater iniquities in attempting to correct it! But what seemed to be impossible to Herbert Spencer was proved at last to be practicable by one of the greatest of all Americans—Henry George, the author of "Progress and Poverty." Mr. George was a prophet, in that he was sensitive to injustice and sought to destroy it. He was also an economist—no less a man than Professor John Dewey rates him among the few original thinkers in the field of social philosophy. Most remarkable of all, he was a statesman, by which I mean a man who could confront a seemingly insuperable problem and find a way of solving it. It was Henry George

who as prophet, economist, and statesman, faced the problem of the land, and solved it for all time. He saw as clearly as anybody that it was impossible to wipe out all the land titles that now exist, and thus begin the history of society all over again, so to speak. But he also saw more clearly than anybody else the simple and pregnant fact that the land, all inhabited land, has a social value—a value created by society and that this value can be taken over by society through the medium of taxation. It is this program for socializing the land through the taxation of land values which is known as the Single Tax. I have no time this morning to go into the details of this idea. Suffice it to say that the Single Tax, as formulated by Henry George, is the first reform which I commend for the saving of society. It is the foundation which we must lay, if our edifice is to stand.

(2) Now, what about this edifice? This question brings me to my second reform; and my first, as I trust my only, quarrel with the Single Taxers. It is the tendency of these disciples of Henry George to argue that the land question is really the only question, and that if this question were settled, all other social questions would be settled with it. Or if not, these questions would settle themselves! This may have been true in earlier stages of human history, when a man could be turned loose on a stretch of soil and left to work out his individual destiny. It may have been true as late as the day when "Progress and Poverty" was being written in San Francisco, and the pioneers were still streaming into the West and asking simply to be given a piece of land and let alone. But it is not true today; nor was it true, I believe, when Henry George was ending his career in New York City. For in our time a new factor, as important in its way as the land itself,

has entered into the picture of human life. I refer to the machine, the consequences of which were first clearly seen by Karl Marx, who characteristically did his thinking in industrial England, as George did his thinking in pioneer California. What is true of the land in private hands is equally true of the machine—it takes away men's freedom. In this machine age, even though we had access to the land, it would do us little good if this were all. For we could not apply our labor to the land in the only way which is now profitable, through the use of the machine, unless we had access to this machine. Lacking the use of the machine, in other words, we would be as badly off as though we lacked the use of the land. For our economy today is a two-fold economy—or, rather, it is composed of two essential elements. On the one hand is the land, from which comes the raw material of wealth; on the other hand is the machine, from which comes all the production, distribution and exchange of the finished material of wealth. The modern man is as dependent upon the one element as upon the other—he must have access to both, if he is to live in freedom. Which brings me to my second reform, which has to do with the social edifice which we are to rear securely upon the foundation of the land—namely, the social ownership and control of the machinery of production, distribution and exchange!

It is the custom, at this point in our discussion, to enter upon a lengthy disquisition upon Socialism, Communism, Syndicalism, Cooperation, and other doctrines of revolutionary change which are characteristic of the social philosophy of the machine-age. That this philosophy, commonly associated with the name of Marx, came into the world *pari passu* with the power machine is, to my mind, one of the most significant, as it is one of

the most inevitable, things that can be imagined. Of course the machine must be a public utility, and thus a public servant, if it is not to destroy utterly the civilization which has produced it. But I am not interested in Karl Marx at this moment, since I do not believe that, in this country at least, it is by the distinctively Marxian road that this great reform, of which I am speaking, is destined to be achieved. Rather am I concerned at this moment with an American, who has given us as impressive a statement of the socialization of the machine as Henry George has given us his immortal statement of the socialization of the land. I refer to Edward Bellamy, the famous author of "Looking Backward" and "Equality."

This man was not a prophet, as Henry George and Karl Marx, for example, were prophets. He was in no sense an economist, or a statesman. He handled no scientific data, and he formulated no political programs. He was essentially a Utopian dreamer, of the classic order of Plato and Sir Thomas More; and as such, he presented a picture of the future which gives a perfect visualization of this second reform which must be achieved if the edifice of our civilization is to endure. Where Henry George stopped, Edward Bellamy began. As surely as "Progress and Poverty" is the Old Testament of our American social Bible, so surely is "Looking Backward" the New. The two books fit together perfectly as the two parts of a completed whole. What Bellamy saw was the iniquity of the private ownership of the machine, and the fatal consequences bound to follow upon this ownership. Also what he saw, or rather foresaw, was the coming of a new, democratic and free society in which the machine would be a public utility, to which all men as workers should have access, and

from which all men as workers should draw their equal share of the common wealth produced by the operation of the machine as dedicated to the interests of all. Where Edward Bellamy was distinctive was in his reading of the future in terms of our distinctive American life. In this sense he was as typically American as Karl Marx was typically European. He saw that there was no necessity in this country for a proletariat, or a class struggle, or a violent and bloody revolution. What would happen here would be constructive and peaceful changes in a process of political evolution, by which capitalism would be gradually made over into socialism, a system of private competition for private profit be transformed into a system of public cooperation for the public good. I know of nothing more amazing than Bellamy's forecast of a society which has no private manufacturing, no trading, no money, unless it be the first feeble and wholly unexpected steps toward something like the fulfilment of this prophecy in the administration of Mr. Roosevelt. No wonder that this age is witnessing a sudden renaissance of the literature of Edward Bellamy, for this man in his whole relation to the problem of our commercial society must be regarded as a definite forerunner of any Messianic future that may be waiting on before.

(3) If Henry George gave us our foundations, then Edward Bellamy gave us the edifice to be reared on these foundations. The socialization of productive power, based firmly on the socialization of land values, provides the structure of the social home in which men can safely live. Which brings me directly to my third reform for the saving of our world!

Just catch, if you will, the picture which I am presenting! The people of the earth are living now in a society which is

their own, in the sense that it belongs to them as a home belongs to the members of the family which reside in it. But how large is this home? How long can it offer adequate accommodation to its inhabitants? How soon will it become crowded, overcrowded, and thus present new problems and new troubles?

These questions bring us to face with the tremendous enigma of population. Let us assume that the land has been freed by the process of the Single Tax. Let us assume as well that the machine has been socialized, so that all wealth is now the common wealth. But humanity is all the time growing, increasing, multiplying. Meanwhile the earth is just so large, and no larger. The amount of land available for occupation and cultivation cannot be expanded. The amount of wealth produced for sustenance can never be extended beyond a certain measurable total. Recent enormous increases in the productive capacity of man has tended to obscure the dreadful truth that in economics, exactly as in mechanics, there is a law of diminishing returns, while the law of reproduction still remains the good old Biblical injunction, "increase and multiply." For our present population, the problem of production has been definitely solved. For the first time in history the race is living on a basis of surplus and not of deficit. But what if this population keeps on doubling and redoubling? What if more and more cultivated land has to be passed over for purposes of sheer occupancy? What if the instinct of reproduction brings defeat to the science of production?

Statistics on these points are impressive. Take those submitted in an authoritative text-book on the subject, Professor East's well-known volume, "Mankind at the Cross Roads."

In the year 1800, there were 850,000,000 people living in the world. Just one hundred years later, in 1900, this number had been exactly doubled. At the present rate of increase, the population of the globe will double every sixty years. This means that, in the year 2000, the earth will contain no less than 3,500,000,000 people; and a thousand years later, in the year 3000, a terrifying total of 34,000,000,000 people. As the earth, exclusive of the Arctic regions, has only some 33,000,000,000 acres of land, this means that in 3000 A. D. there will be one person per single acre of land. But "a reasonable maximum for the world's future population is one person for each 2.5 acres in 40 per cent of the land area of the globe," says Professor East. "This gives a figure of 5,200,000,000, a population which at the present rate of increase would be reached in just a little over a century." That this "present rate of increase" is no joke is indicated by the experience of a single country, Japan. In the island empire of the Mikado, the population has already reached a saturation point. There is no more land for cultivation. Yet at the present moment the people of Japan are increasing at the rate of 900,000 every year. And there are persons who are wondering at what is going on today in Manchuria and Mongolia! Nor is Japan the ony offender. Look at Italy, where Mussolini is urging mothers to have ever larger families, and Germany, where Hitler is setting women to the stern task of breeding warriors. "People who do not consult the census returns," says the famous explorer, V. Stefansson, an expert authority on this subject, "are in the habit of laughing at the Malthusian doctrine of population. But those who look at the census returns do not laugh."

It is these facts which bring me to my third reform—namely, birth control. With this I would associate another American, Margaret Sanger, unquestionably one of the greatest women of our day. It is interesting to trace the development of Mrs. Sanger's thought, from the time when she was a young nurse working among the poor, to this present hour when she is one of the outstanding leaders of world opinion. In the beginning, Mrs. Sanger was impressed by the plight of individual mothers who, for reasons of health, or poverty, of family circumstances, could not afford to have more children. It was the desire to free the housewife of the tenements from the intolerable burden of child-bearing which induced this heroic woman to launch her crusade for the deliverance of motherhood from bondage. Then, as she continued her work, Mrs. Sanger's gaze began to look up and out. She began to understand that the question of reproduction was not merely an individual but a social problem as well. She made the astounding discovery that not only the single mother but the nation, the race, could not afford to multiply indefinitely. For the good of us all, this ceaseless breeding must be controlled. So that now we face a third fundamental reform, to which all enlightened men and women are committed—namely, birth control. In this momentous hour of human history we are moving into a new age of what is known as "planned economy." Production must be adapted to population, and population to production. Which means that we must establish birth control as the judgment of public conscience and the criterion of public action, that the family may not outgrow the house which it must occupy!

(4) Our problem now is being solved. Deep and sure we have laid the foundations. On this we have reared the

structure of the home. In this home we have established a population adapted to its area. The foundations will not crumble; the edifice will hold together; the inhabitants will not be submerged in the horrors of overcrowding. But one thing remains—peace and order among the members of the family!

This will be greatly aided by the control of population, for few things so aggravate humanity to disorder as congestion. But there are other factors of inward psychological temper and outward political and economic relationship which are central to the problem of world peace. It is these which contribute to the phenomenon of war, the abolition of which is the fourth reform which must be achieved for the salvation of society.

There was a time when war could go on without any particular disaster, or even discomfort, to the human race. Conflict between two nations was like a fight between two neighbors—an occasion of pain to the combatants and of excitement to the onlookers, but of no serious damage to anybody. Occasionally there came vast convulsive struggles, such as the Thirty Years War in the 17th century, and the Napoleonic Wars in the 19th, which were as destructive as vast cataclysms of nature. But these were exceptions which were conspicuous on this account. In our time, however, war has taken on a new and altogether terrifying aspect. In two respects, at least, it has suddenly become the most deadly menace which humanity has ever faced.

First, war is today a universal phenomenon. An armed conflict which breaks out in any one part of the world swiftly and surely engulfs all other parts of the world. Separate as

the nations are today in customs, feelings, and ambitions, they are yet so closely knit together by the vast complex of our contemporary economic and social life, that war sooner or later spreads to all the peoples of the earth. It is like a pestilence which crosses seas and conquers continents. The last war was a World War; and the next war, if or when it comes, will be another, and perhaps also the last, World War.

Secondly, war in our time is destructive beyond all conception, or even imagination. In the old days, when men fought with bows and arrows, and swords, and even guns, no great damage was done except to the bodies of the immediate combatants and to the property of the immediate terrain. But in our days have come weapons so terrible—submarines, tanks, bombing planes, liquid fire, poisonous gas, and incredible explosives—that there is no longer any possibility of limiting the range and the intensity of havoc. For the first time we have reached a period in history when man's destructive far surpasses his creative capacity. In our time we can destroy more lives and property in a month than we can hope to replace in a century. The Judgment Day has come! War and civilization can no longer exist together in the same world. We must either get rid of war, or war will get rid of us.

Our fourth reform, therefore, is manifest. It is the abolition of war. How this end is to be accomplished is not for me to say in this particular discussion. Outlawry, disarmament, free trade, international justice, world sovereignty, are all so many elements in the problem. How soon, if ever, this goal will be reached, I dare not prophesy, especially in this hour of confusion, violence, and terror. But if the day of peace shall come, and civilization thus survive upon this

planet, I am certain that the historians of that happier day will look back upon our time and record upon their annals that the story of man's salvation began with Woodrow Wilson and the founding of the League of Nations. I know full well that Wilson failed, and confess that the League has at last collapsed. But failure is not seldom the condition of success, and disaster the preparation for triumph. At any rate, I see not in Wilson's policies but in his ideas, certainly not in his deeds but as certainly in his dreams, the planting of that seed which "is not quickened except it die." All hope may be lost in our time, and even for all time. But I prefer to believe that we have fallen to rise, are baffled to fight better; and that thus, in some not too distant day, the Wilsonian faith will yet be justified. "In these days to come," said Wilson, "it will be necessary to lay afresh, and upon a new plan, the foundations of peace among the nations. To take part in such a service the people of the United States have sought to prepare themselves ever since the days when they set up a new nation, in the high and honorable hope that it might show mankind the way to liberty."

Such are my four reforms! The socialization of the land, the socialization of the machine, birth control, and the end of war! Of all these, the most important, most insistent, most critical at this moment, is the last. Unless we end war and establish peace, the flames of violence will consume our house and level it in ashes to the ground. If war is to continue, even as a possibility, it becomes futile even to attempt our other reforms. For to what end, or to what good, shall our foundations be laid deep and sure, and our edifice reared tall and fair, and our people adjusted to ways of happiness and sweet accord, if at any moment all is to be lost in one devour-

ing cataclysm of arms? The task of this generation, of this very hour, the one task which overshadows all others whatsoever, is this task of international peace. For this great achievement we must work with feverish intensity and utter devotion, lest the night come when no man can work!

That peace can be won, and all our reforms achieved, I must believe. Therefore would I repeat at the close what I said at the beginning of this sermon, that I refuse to believe that the problem of society is so strangely difficult. Unless our intelligence is bankrupt and our spirit dead, we can accomplish these great changes, as other and even greater changes have been accomplished in the past. Man is the creator of his own destiny, and in his hands lies the raw material for his task. There needs only courage, patience, and high resolve.

I think of that famous poem by Edwin Markham, whom I love to call our American Poet Laureate, which sums up all that I would say:

"We men of Earth have here the stuff
Of Paradise—we have enough!
We need no other stones to build
The stairs into the Unfulfilled—
No other ivory for the doors—
No other marble for the floors—
No other cedar for the beam
And dome of man's immortal dream.

Here on the paths of every day—
Here on the common human way
Is all the stuff the gods would take
To build a Heaven, to mold and make
New Edens. Ours the stuff sublime
To build Eternity in time!"