

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

IT is characteristic of current thinking that it deals with surface indications. One would scarcely imagine that all of these problems we call problems of distribution were existant prior to the invention of money and prior to the establishment of forms of government. When wealth is considered it is estimated in the form of money; when wages are spoken of the mind thinks of so many dollars a day, or so many shillings a week. And it goes no further than that.

IT is perhaps no exaggeration to say that half of our so-called economic works of the present decade deal with the subject of money, and hence the basic fundamental laws of political economy have been utterly lost in their reasoning and calculations. This has resulted in the world losing sight of much economic phenomena that is more important and entirely independent of money systems, stable money, the gold standard, bi-metalism, greenbackism, and all the host of related theories and fallacies covering the medium of exchange. In this welter of confusion, this Babel of tongues, the really significant things are rarely touched upon.

ALL the fundamental phenomena of distribution are prior to the invention of money and remain under all systems of coinage. Men work and produce, and are robbed of the fruits of their toil through tariffs and taxes, and the private collection of the rent of land. Thus the masses of men are kept in poverty because of institutions independent of all mediums of exchange, which while not unimportant are purely subsidiary and, measured fundamentally, largely negligible.

IF we keep in mind the true connotations respecting money, while realizing that faulty monetary systems *do* cause loss and inconvenience, we shall be nearer to the solution of all real economic problems. But so long as we imagine that these problems can be solved through approaches to money or changes in the monetary system (vide Father Coughlin) we are traveling *from* and not *toward* a real solution.

BUT there is one thing that is significant and reassuring. That is that the social ferment is now mount-

ing to the top. It is no longer confined to the members of the lower strata, the less influential groups, but the Church, and notably the Catholic Church, is showing signs of uneasiness. The phenomenon of Dr. Coughlin, despite his concern with the superficialities of the problem, as for example the question of money to which we have had occasion to refer, is not unpromising in the welter of confusion to which he has in some measure contributed. And this not merely because of his occasional hints at something more fundamental, but because here is a priest of the Church who for the first time in several decades speaks for the disinherited, and, doffing his priestly robes, appears in the character of an American citizen in a fearless assault against what he regards as economic abuses.

JUST how much of this has the friendly countenance of the Pope, just how much of it is due to example set by the Supreme Ruler of the Church, it is of course impossible to say. Let the reader's memory go back to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who, disappointed at the failure of the then Supreme Pontiff to carry out the liberal professions of his earlier years, wrote these bitter lines:

"Perhaps it is that other eyes may see
From Casa Guidi windows what is done
Or undone; but whatsoever deed they be
Pope Pius will be glorified in none."

IT may be said with confidence that it is doubtful if ever again another Elizabeth Barrett Browning will be able justly to voice such criticism. The present Pope appears in a very different light. A benignant presence rules at the Vatican. Despite the dignity of his great office, he is a lovable personality. A change has come over the Church, a very subtle but very noticable change. The social ferment has risen. In high places now the economic and social structure of society is being subjected to searching questions. There is everywhere a suspicion that the foundations of society are unsound. From this inquiry nothing but good can come.

WE repeat that the phenomena of Dr. Coughlin and his Bishop are distinctly reassuring. Confident