

## POSTBAG—OUR OWN AND OTHERS

### Reflections on an Open Letter

To the Editor, LAND & LIBERTY.

Sir.—I am glad that my "Open Letter to the Government" has aroused enough interest to provoke discussion. I will try to reply to your correspondent's comments.

It is true of course that, *under present conditions*, people of limited means are better off with pensions and social services than they would be without them. But they are *not* better off than they would be under a free State, with a just method of taxation, access to all natural opportunities and liberty to produce and trade at will. They are not nearly so well off. In other words, I deny that the Welfare State in itself is any benefit at all. Freedom-loving and self-respecting men and women do not want the State to care for them from the cradle to the grave, with all the regulations and restrictions such care brings with it. What they *do* want is the kind of society in which they can happily provide for themselves during their working years, and in their old age can sit, figuratively speaking, "under *their own* vine and *their own* fig tree, none making them afraid."

It is also true that those whose income is so small that they cannot live on it are exempt from taxation; and that if they add to it, *e.g.*, by continuing to earn when elderly or by drawing an annuity (stored-up earlier earnings), they are not at first taxed at the standard rate. But as soon as their total income (old age pension included!) reaches a level which ensures any measure of comfort in these expensive days, they are liable for tax at 9s. (or 9s. 6d.). By the way, many of the elderly persons referred to are single, and their allowances are small compared with those of married men.

Lastly, I admit that the deplorable necessity for re-armament is largely the cause of our high income tax (though not of all the other evils from which we suffer). But this ought not to be the case. Surely the cost of the defence of the land should above all else, be met out of the value of the land. Even in the Middle Ages they knew that! The one redeeming feature of the Feudal System was precisely this, that it compelled those who held the land to provide for its defence. Let us do likewise.

Yours, etc.,

FLORENCE VERINDER.

Southall.

### Marxism

By Mr. Ernest M. Ginders in a letter to the COLNE TIMES, March 16, 1951.

That the Marxian sophistries cannot be applied to man's affairs without promoting economic chaos has been proved beyond question or doubt. His slogan "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" is an absurdity since it ignores the observed urges of economic man, which may be stated as follows:—1. Man seeks to satisfy his desires with the least possible exertion. 2. The desires of man are illimitable and grow with his means to satisfy them.

These were the urges which inspired the dawn man to make his first primitive tools, and have since remained the inheritance of his successors. They continue to operate regardless of the dictates of tyrants or of the propaganda of the babble machine.

They proved powerful enough to destroy the Communist economy of the Soviet Union at its birth and to cause its replacement by the existing police and prison regime as the alternative to economic collapse. Even so, being irrepressible, they find their way past the Kremlin guards as well as through the fences of the Siberian prison camps.

These same dangers now threaten our welfare state economy. In their efforts to satisfy their desires with the least possible exertion, the means have degenerated to defying the law with impunity by monopolistic pressure groups who repudiate contracts, disrupt our economy and hold up the community to ransom for their own profit.

Given a continuation of this process with the added burden of the re-armament programme, a dictatorship of our affairs may likewise present itself as the alternative to stagnation and chaos.

Since Marxian Communism failed from the outset and was replaced by a police and prison regime, now dominant and ruthless

in its methods, it is absurd to describe the Russian Block as Communist States, their correct description is Prison States, and they should be so referred to.

### Taking Bertrand Russell to Task

Miss Enid Lakeman had the following letter published in *The Listener*, June 21:—

"It seems to me curious that Bertrand Russell, in his fifth talk, should assert the Marxist doctrine that free competition inevitably develops into monopoly and should not think it necessary to give his listeners any proof of this.

"That a development in that direction has occurred is, unhappily, obvious enough, but we must not write it off as a law of nature until we have first considered whether any avoidable (and possibly reversible) errors of man have contributed to it. This, Bertrand Russell did not attempt to do.

"If there was once a state of free competition, how did the first monopoly arise? Were there no mistaken laws that put the power of the State behind those who wished to crush out their competitors? Were there no customs duties that protected a man from the competition of one in another country, or perhaps even in the next town? Above all, did we not make the mistake of allowing private people to treat land as though it were their own private creation and extract from their fellow-men rent for what is nature's gift to us all?

"If we undo those mistakes and still find that monopolies grow and flourish, then perhaps it will be time to talk of inevitability; until then, we are wrong to blame nature for what may be entirely our own fault, and foolish to base our economic policy on a theory whose truth has not been tested."

### "Curing Most of our Troubles"

Mr. Walter N. Campbell, in a letter published in the *Washington Star*, writes:—

"Our voteless District (Washington, D.C.) now has a sales tax on top of all the sneak-thief taxes hidden in the price of everything on which it will fall. However, we are faring no worse than other parts of the country having the vote.

"American voters have yet to learn that they can't get the wealthy by taxing wealth. If a majority of them had the gumption to insist on gradual retirement of income and other predatory and price raising taxes by an increasing allocation of the social values in our land to public use, where they rightly belong, most of our troubles, such as the housing and slum problem now increasing the tax load, would resolve themselves.

"The public purse would get more on a much smaller demand through a great reduction in costs of collection.

"Our rackrented farm tenants and sharecroppers would have a fair chance to become landowners and, with other workers, have complete possession of the fruits of their labour.

"We could then be on the way to adding economic freedom to our much lauded freedoms of expression that, however handy as vents for our convictions and prejudices, are of little or no avail toward giving us the equality of opportunity dreamed of by the founding fathers, and an equitable distribution of the Nation's wealth such as would be our best defence against the aims of 'isms' to enslave us under an all-dominant state."

### Malthus, Right or Wrong ?

In the February 24 issue of *Chemist & Industry* Mr. D. P. Hopkins, in an article on food and clothing production, gave unqualified support to the Malthusian doctrine that population tends to increase faster than subsistence. He was challenged on this point by Mr. M. W. Miller and the following correspondence was published.

Mr. Miller wrote (April 14):—

"In your second leading article dated February 24, 1951, you make a reference to the Malthusian theory which appears to give it the status of accepted fact. May I point out that Henry

George disproved this theory (see *Progress and Poverty*, Book II, Chapters 1-4) and I believe it is correct to say that it has since been dropped by the great majority of economists."

*Mr. Hopkins wrote (April 28):—*

"It was most interesting to read Mr. Miller's letter in your issue of April 14, 1951, stating that Henry George disproved the Malthusian theory. This news would be exceedingly comforting to the millions of human beings in India and China who, in the last hundred years alone, have seemed to be showing how grimly true the Malthusian theory is. Unfortunately, it is too late to give them this comfort—they have died by famine, paradoxical confirmations of the theory that Henry George has disproved and which, according to Mr. Miller, has been dropped by the great majority of economists.

"Possibly the Rev. Thomas Malthus conceived his theory in terms of Western populations. It has been factually proved over and over again in the East, where rates of population increase have been so much higher. Economists are notoriously parochial in their outlook and I would respectfully suggest that Mr. Miller takes a fresh look at Malthusianism in terms of world rather than Western population. However, by the year 2000 or thereabouts, it may not be necessary to look so far away for evidence that Malthus did not put forward a theory, but talked plain commonsense.

"Unless food can be synthesized at moderate cost without passing through a soil and seasonal production phase or unless new sources of marine food can be developed on a large-scale, or unless present rates of population expansion can be quickly and appreciably reduced, the last decade of the present century will amply justify 'the gloomy reverend gentleman's' predictions. It is possible that science's major contribution to balancing a perilous food/population equilibrium is the atomic bomb."

*Mr. Miller responded (June 6):—*

"In resorting to the Malthusian theory to explain conditions in India, Mr. Hopkins is being as parochial as anyone else. Malthus claimed a natural law, so either it holds everywhere or it is invalid. Among animals and plants it appears true that population tends to press on subsistence, for they cannot control their environment, but man can affect his food supply to an extent which is unpredictable. Events in the western world since Malthus have shown his constant arithmetical progression to be nonsense. The geometrical ratio has an obvious basis, but it is not constant.

"The theory which fits in much better with observation is that of Doubleday, who said that the tendency of a population to increase was an unconscious effort to counter those forces which threaten it, so that where poverty exists birthrates are high and where affluence obtains they are low. This is verified by comparisons both between different classes in one country, and between countries of different living standards.

"As to India, if disproof of the Malthusian theory is no comfort to her starving millions, its truth would be less, for it would spell their doom and render vain all efforts to apply science to the increasing of food supplies. The causes of famine in Asia are man made. The peasants have been kept in such a state of poverty by unfair taxes based on crops that they cannot farm their land efficiently. Only 34 per cent. of the cultivable area of India is sown to crops. With 300 million acres opened to cultivation and more efficient methods used, the population could easily support themselves on their present highly vegetarian diet.

"As with India, so with the world. Development of industry in countries with large backward populations will result, in accordance with Doubleday's law, in declining birthrates which will markedly affect the world total, and the trend may well follow the interesting asymptotic curve derived by Pearl. For the feeding of this growing population the earth has ample resources. Fifty-two per cent of the world's land area is fit for cultivation. Only 7-10 per cent. is being cultivated. The day is a long way off, if it ever comes, when we shall need to consider synthesising foods. The sun can still do it for us through the enormous areas of fertile soil waiting to be opened up.

"Science is doing much to increase yields and efficiency, but it is up to governments to remove unfair systems of taxation and other deterrents to production. The masses are not 'clamouring to be fed,' they are asking to be allowed to feed themselves."

## HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

It has been decided to continue the economic study classes at Westminster, throughout the summer months. The total number now attending the Basic and Advanced Courses, which began in mid-June, is 65, of whom 33 are new students. The class for the study of International Trade, which will be comprised of last term's Basic Course students, will begin on July 24. In the meantime, students are attending a specially arranged series of discussion-lectures as follows:—

June 21. "Capital and Interest." Speaker: V. H. Blundell.

June 28. "Malthusian Influence To-day." Speaker: L. J. Hubbard.

July 5. "Precursors of Henry George." Speaker: V. Saldji.

July 12. Brains Trust. Question Master: V. H. Blundell.

July 19. "The Town and Country Planning Act." Speaker: C. E. A. Aitken.

A fifth study and discussion course for advanced students entitled "Political Economy—Theory and Practice," is now being conducted at 4 Great Smith Street, S.W.1. Lessons deal with modern trends in economic thought and their relation to the fundamental principles of economics. Also dealt with in the course are arguments against Henry George's proposals, and the political background of Land Value Taxation, the latter embodying a lecture by Mr. A. W. Madsen, Principal of the School. There is no set text book; reading assignments where called for are current publications which state the particular case to be examined, examples being the booklets "Full Employment" published by the W.E.A., and "The Rating of Site Values" (the arguments against) published by the Conservative Party. The course is being conducted by Mr. V. H. Blundell.

The classes, which are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, are timed to start at 7 p.m., but well before this time volunteers arrive to give clerical and other assistance to the School, some going on afterwards to Hyde Park to educate others from the public platform.

## ROBERT SCHALKENBACH FOUNDATION

The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation whose premises are situated at 50 East 69th Street, New York, has published on attractive booklet giving an account of its Twenty-five Years of Progress. There stands out the fact that since its formation it has distributed no fewer than 138,920 copies of *Progress and Poverty*.

Robert Schalkenbach in his last will and testament had bequeathed a fund for the creation of the Foundation which in June, 1925, was chartered under the laws of the State of New York as a non-profit, non-political membership corporation established to teach, expound and propagate the ideas of Henry George. How it has carried out its appointed task is indicated not only by its library of publications, which covers all the books, pamphlets and addresses of Henry George (and in addition some modern books restating George's thesis), but by its expanding field of activity in the educational and business fields. The Foundation has promoted the circulation of George's works among college professors all over the country and teaching manuals have been requested by several hundreds of them, these being supplied without charge with special lesson sheets. Representatives of the Foundation have also lectured at universities in New York, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri and Wisconsin. Publicity has been specifically directed towards Congressmen, Governors of states and others in public life. Leading newspapers and magazines receive copies of new editions and new publications for review and also carry advertisements publicising the Foundation's work. Support has been given to journals devoted to spreading the philosophy of Henry George and funds have been used also to promote essay competitions on the Taxation of Land Values and to assist the late Oscar Geiger in the foundation of the now prospering American Henry George School.

An important work still continuing is the translation and publication of George's work into other languages. In 1941 a quarterly, *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, was started by the Foundation to provide a medium of expression for college and university professors; and, at the same time to