

POPULATION AND MALTHUS

The logic of events hunted the Malthusians out of their claims that population tends to increase in a geometrical ratio; 2 to 4, 8 to 16, 32 to 64 and so on; but that the food product increases only like 1, 2, 2½, 3½, 4 and so on, to an early stop.

Then they got up a modified theory of the blessings of "Things as they are" and called themselves "Neo Malthusians."

The work on Population which made the fame of Malthus proves to be so full of ill logic as to leave one wondering how it attained its eminence. That increase of population is the cause of poverty cannot be demonstrated until it is proven that there are not other and more potent causes. These Malthus quietly ignores.

Nearly two-thirds of the human race are grouped on about one-half of the area of the land of the whole earth, China, Japan and India. Yet in these countries the inhabitants to the square mile are fewer than in those countries where the population is greater.

France with a population of 180 to the square mile enjoys a large measure of prosperity; Turkey with much less density of population is sunk in poverty. In 1846 Ireland had a population of 9,000,000. To-day with a third less she should, according to the Malthusian argument, have a large measure of prosperity, but poverty persists in Ireland now as then. The fact is, these countries are at present grossly under-populated. For example: All China, including Manchuria, has over three and a third million square miles (to be exact, 3,341,500 square miles) and a little more than three hundred million persons, about a hundred to the square mile. That gives for the 342,639,000 persons about six acres per person, or say 30 acres to the family.

A learned professor in Yale to whom I submitted these figures figured it out, to his own great satisfaction, that omitting Manchuria, there would be only seventeen acres to the family. Well we won't spend time on that. A Chinese family can live in luxury on one acre; China is as long as the United States and has enough land for every inhabitant and for more than half the rest of mankind as well, besides her five thousand miles of seacoast which gives access to the boundless food supply of the ocean.

Malthus wrote when the resources of the unexplored lands and waters in North and South America were hardly suspected. He did not foresee the tremendous agricultural development that loomed just ahead of him. Nor did he dream of something else that lay in the future, the extraordinary development of invention and commerce. That with all his familiarity with the food producing capacities of many countries, he underestimated the food supply of which the whole earth was capable, seems clear. He wrote before the era of the enormously increased nineteenth century production had begun and when the world's vaster capabilities had not been revealed. Every great invention like the railroad, the trolley, the steamship, the automobile, the airship, the wheel hoe, the reaper, the telegraph, the telephone, the concrete road, opens up to us a new source of supply like that of the discovery of a new country.

Malthus brushed aside the dream of economic equality which all generous minds cherish as possible of ultimate realization. "Men cannot live in the midst of plenty," he says. "All cannot share alike in the bounties of nature." He seemed to think that to "share alike in the bounties of nature" was only possible under some communistic system which must contain the seeds of its own certain dissolution. For he says, "Were there no established administration of property every man would be obliged to guard with force his little store."

Which may be true enough, though he seems not to have conceived that men might "share alike in the bounties of nature" under "an established administration of property."

After all, progress is in the direction of a more equitable participation in the enjoyment of the bounties of nature. We must harken back to a remoter barbarism for a denial of this truth from any authoritative source. So determined, however, was Malthus in the notion that any teachings of the principle of equal rights was inherently vicious, and dangerous in the influence it might exert on society, that even Paine's Rights of Man was curiously abhorrent to him. "Nothing," he says, "would so effectually counteract the mischief of Mr Paine's Rights of Man as a general knowledge of the real rights of man. What these rights are it is not my business at present to explain."

He never made it his business to explain. How could he? Perhaps it would have shaken his own belief. How can men have rights in a world where the race is penned in by a wall of subsistence against which they must ineffectually beat their spiritual wings in a vain endeavour to escape its confines?—Joseph Dana Miller, in *Land and Freedom*, February, 1927.

A country where wages are low is a poor customer for the goods of the more advanced nations. To raise the standard of life in these poorer countries is a matter of vital interest to world trade. Tariffs do nothing to achieve this object, but on the contrary still further depress the undesirable conditions and still further lessen purchasing power.—Rt. Hon. Philip Snowden, M.P., in *The Banker*, November.

* * *

"There is no doubt about the gravity of the present situation. We have got into the seventh year of great trade depression and unemployment. For seven years you have had over a million men out of work. When will that million become half a million? It would be serious enough then. In the old days times of employment were times of recruiting for the British army. A million unemployed to-day meant a field of recruitment for the Communist party.

"It was a grave economic problem; it was a menacing social problem. It was the duty of all those who had any sense of responsibility in a nation to put their whole strength of mind, knowledge, and experience into attempting to solve it."—Mr LLOYD GEORGE, at Rochdale, 25th March.

Comments on Some Current Criticisms of Land-Value Taxation

By HARRY GUNNISON BROWN,

Professor of Economics in the University of Missouri.

A Reviewer in the *New York Nation* writes:—

It was full time for some competently equipped economist to take up the cudgels in behalf of the economically tenable parts of Henry George's doctrine. Mr Brown has done it with zeal, and on the whole with skill. Of course this puts him outside the fold of the safe and sane economists, and the vigor of his onslaught has already occasioned some little fluttering in the academic dove-cotes. But say what we may, land does differ significantly, for purposes of economic analysis, from factories and railroad trains and other things that men make. The true economic scientist, then, if he is going to devise tax systems, must take account of those differences, and not simply foam at the mouth every time the single tax is mentioned.

54 Pages.

Price 6d.

From our Offices.