

LAND & LIBERTY

PUBLISHED BY THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR
THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES, LTD.
Forty-eighth Year. Established June, 1894.

By Post 3s. 0d. per annum.

Editor : A. W. Madsen

Associate Editor : F. C. R. Douglas

4 GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON, S.W.1

Telegrams :
Eulav, Parl, London.

Telephone :
Abbey 6665

Postage on this issue is One Penny

SEPTEMBER, 1941

"THE FORWARD MARCH"

IN PURSUANCE of his campaign for a better social order, Sir R. Acland, M.P., has added another to the series of books he has already written and given it the title of *The Forward March*: "If you will leave each man free to promote his own interest you will thereby most speedily promote the liberty, equality and material well-being of all." This, he writes, was the accepted thesis that dominated life during the centuries that led up to the present war. Though it only gave real liberty to the very few and only gave equality of opportunity in some rather special parts of the world, it on the whole did not work too badly. This can be affirmed of years long since passed, but no one can deny that with the passage of time the product of the system has been amazing material well-being on the one hand and poverty on the other.

To account for this breakdown we are told by Sir Richard that something fundamental has happened which you cannot "unhappen." What has happened is that the world has filled up. "A system which worked well enough when the world was not full of it will not work when the world is full of it." We have emerged from the age of inevitable scarcity into the age of potential plenty and a system which worked well enough in the former conditions will not work in the latter. "The task before us is to convert the world from a creaking, chaotic, wasteful, industrial, community based on the economics of scarcity to a smoothly working, well-ordered industrial community based on the economics of plenty." It is the aim of this book to demonstrate how this can and must be done and with this end in view an analysis of the system that needs conversion is undertaken in which we are told that to leave each man free to promote his own interest is to leave him free to live selfishly for himself alone: it is to narrow a man's life disastrously; it is to appeal to his petty selfish interests: to call on him to live for his smaller self instead of for his bigger self—the whole community. "To live for himself alone does not make a man greater or nobler than before. On the contrary, it makes him smaller, meaner and more inharmonious than before."

So long as each man lives for himself alone there is a part of his nature, a part of his power which is bound down and this is the part that must be released if we are to reach a harmonious social order. We simply cannot remain an individualistic society of separate men, each working for self and urged on by his selfish interest. But this living for self is just what the system of freedom for each to promote his own well-being invites men to do, and Sir Richard would replace it by a system which invites and indeed constrains men to live and work for their greater selves: the whole community.

How is this new order, to which Sir Richard gives the name "The Service Community for Humanity in

Peace" to be established? His answer is that in the new order the rule—with some vaguely defined exceptions in favour of the small man—will be "Common Ownership" and not individual ownership. This, he claims, will eliminate the motive of selfish gain, the source of all evil. "Common ownership" will enable us to escape from perpetually plaguing ourselves with our own private little anxieties. We shall then live for our greater selves: self-seeking will be supplanted by service. We shall then live under a system in which private gain coincides with gain to the whole community and, through a kind of gentlemanly communism, arrive at the end he has in view.

In working out practical details Sir Richard encounters a host of difficulties. He is faced with the problem of deciding what shall be held in common and what shall still be the property of individuals and in this he does not seem to be guided by any principle leading him to a decision.

Into the resulting maze we shall not follow him, but taking his own advice—frequently offered in these pages—we shall stick to discussion of first principles and maintain that, despite the high idealism shining through this book, his conception of what comes from "granting freedom to each to promote his own interests" is profoundly mistaken. If present economic society were more closely examined than it is in these pages very different conclusions would be arrived at. Its distinguishing feature as compared with earlier forms of civilization would be disclosed as specialization or division of labour and disposal of the product on the market. The attempt of individuals or small groups to be economically self-sufficing has become a thing of the past. Each specialized producer now brings his product to market and there exchanges it for the product of some other specialized producer. Each specialist must therefore bring to market something that some other specialist needs or would like to have.

The essence of this arrangement is that each while working for what Sir Richard would call his own selfish advantage is also working for the advantage of his fellow-producer. Is there anything selfish or reprehensible in this? Is it not simply an arrangement to secure the rendering of equal service and a very perfect arrangement too, because the advantage of each producer automatically coincides with the advantage of all? But the truth of this depends on one condition, and that condition is that the market as the regulator of the division of labour be kept *free from interference*. The misfortune is that to-day the market is not free from interference or obstruction, and consequently does not ensure that each shall take out of it in measure as he puts in. There exist monopolies or special privileges the beneficiaries of which are enabled to live without rendering service and these monopolies—the greatest of which is the monopoly by a small minority of the population of land and its rent—command a price on the market so that it no longer correctly measures the value of services as it would otherwise do.

In other words, the market of our day is perverted and frustrated and fails to secure that service be rendered for service. It is the existence and marketing of parasitic interests—the "alchemists" of Thomas Carlyle—which blocks the way to what otherwise would be the true and natural co-operative society without communism and free from all taint of the self-seeking denounced by Sir Richard.

The fault of the present system is that it fails to do just what Sir Richard postulates that it does, namely, "leave each man free to promote his own interest." This is because of privilege and monopoly. If some men

* Published by Geo. Allen & Unwin, Ltd. Price 2s. 6d.

enjoy privileges, then the others are not perfectly free, but are bound by those privileges.

If the Forward March is to proceed it is therefore these vested interests which first and foremost must be abolished and a free market secured. But in these pages we find no word on monopoly and its frustrating effect. Its bearing on the problem before us is simply ignored. We are assured that on the forward march the choice before us lies between attempting to advance to the new society of "Common Ownership" along the lines Sir Richard lays down with all its glorious promise, or struggling on in the disharmony and frustration of the

existing social order. The dilemma is false, for a third and more promising road lies open—the destruction of those privileges and monopolies which enable some to command service from others without rendering service in return thus for ever preventing the attainment of the "Service Community for Humanity in Peace" at which Sir Richard aims. Yet despite such shortcomings, there shines through these pages a high idealism and ardent will to a better world which entitle this book to be recommended as a stimulant to thought and action.

W. R. L.

PROTECTION AND RENT

(In 1842 the National Anti-Corn-Law League published a pamphlet on the Corn Laws consisting of extracts from the writings of Col T. Perronet Thompson, the author of the *Catechism on the Corn Laws* and other works. The selection was made by Richard Cobden and may be assumed to be in accordance with his views. The following are some of the passages contained in the pamphlet, the references being to the collected edition of Col Thompson's works in six volumes.)

POLITICAL ECONOMY

The proper business of every man and every hour, is to know as much as he can of political economy. Not but it may also be desirable that he should learn something of arithmetic and book-keeping by double entry, be acquainted with the properties of the lever and inclined plane, and have a portion of information touching the nature of the planetary motions and the divisions of the surface of the terraqueous globe. But all these acquirements may only render him a useful slave; and the other is the education which must enable him to keep the benefit of his labours for himself. It has indeed long been defined to be the science of preventing our betters from defrauding us; which is sufficient to account for its being eagerly pursued on one hand, and vilified on the other.—Vol. II, p. 167.

POPULATION

It is a cruel joke to talk about the evils of an increasing population, when that population is cut off by law from the power of selling the produce of its labour, for the interest of a robber caste; who tell us plainly, that like the French *noblesse*, they will pay no taxes, unless they may have liberty to take the amount again from other people, and who, if speedy change of mind be not vouchsafed them, will come to the same rough end.—Vol. II, p. 269.

JACOBINISM OF THE RICH

The origin and foundation of property, is labour. The proposal to keep up rent by restrictions virtually includes the essence of personal slavery; which consists in obliging one man to labour for the benefit of another without an equivalent. The landlords may have a property in their honest rent; but they have not a property in the power of adding to it by violence.—Vol. IV, p. 514.

The poor ought to have corn at the cheapest for which it can be got; and if they have not, they are to blame if they are satisfied.

If the poor were to tell the rich that they ought to have a "reasonable" income, as, for instance, one or two hundred a year, and if they had this they ought to be satisfied,—and they, the poor, would take the difference; it would be pronounced to be clean *jacobinism* and spoliation. The poor have as much right to do this, as the rich man has to tell the poor that sixty shillings is a "reasonable" price for his quarter of

corn, and therefore the rich will take the difference. Much has been said of the jacobinism of the poor against the rich, but very little of the jacobinism of the rich against the poor;—though one is only matter of speculation and alarm, and the other meets every man three times a day when he sits down to eat.—Vol. IV, p. 527.

EXCHANGE

Two things are necessary to the completion of an act of commerce; first, that we should have what others want; secondly, that we should be at liberty to receive what they can afford to pay in, and it will be worth our while to take.

A merchant in the actual state of things can afford to sell a piece of Leeds or Manchester goods in Prussia or Poland for a hundred crowns. If he could afford to take eighty, he might sell two pieces where he now sells one. If he was allowed to lay out the eighty crowns in corn, and bring it to England to a free market, he could sell the corn for as much as would give him a profit on the whole; and consequently he would accept the eighty crowns, and sell two pieces instead of one, and get two profits for himself, and give two profits to the manufacturers. He is restrained from selling the corn; and therefore he is restrained from doing all the rest.—Vol. IV, p. 523.

When a manufacturer produces goods and exchanges them abroad for corn, he may as truly be said to produce the corn, as if it came out of his loom or his flattening-mill. And if he is prohibited from doing this, it is his production that in reality is stopped.—Vol. IV, p. 481.

ROBBING ONE ANOTHER

What the landowners really say, is, "Let us rob you all, and then you shall rob one another." This is the bargain they offer; and the manufacturers swallow it open-mouthed.

Of all the petitioners upon this subject, the men of Stroud appear to be the wisest; for they petitioned that all the monopolies of the manufacturers might be taken away, on condition that the great monopoly of all went along with them. How the men of Stroud came by their wisdom, those who know them can best tell; but it is clear they are wise in their generation.

The amusing part of the proposed fraud is, that we are all to get rich by robbing one another. The leader of the administration himself does not pretend to believe it. He knows full well, that the plan is as stupid as it would be to attempt to double the strength of an army by doubling each battalion in turn by drafts from the others. Nobody believes it but idiots. Rogues pretend to believe it, that they may feather their own nests.—Vol. IV, p. 496.

THE CORN LAW A QUESTION OF RENT

The landlords, by the exercise of their power in the legislature, lay a tax to keep out foreign corn. Their undisguised object in this is to raise their rents; for