

be said. Too much is repeated to-day as to the weakness and deficiencies of savage races. When one adds to the acute misery of perhaps a fifth of any community where public rights to the land are ignored, the constant racking anxiety for the future of perhaps another three-fifths, and the fear of violence and instability which haunts the "Thoroughly Comfortable," we may doubt if the savage or barbarian, take him at his worst, is not better off on the average than we.

When we reflect on the illimitable production of good things which our metal slaves can provide for us, on our facilities for international mutual help by exchange, on the inventive faculties of our young folk now as a rule crushed by poverty and perverted by a lack of decent opportunity for self-expression, we can indeed be grateful for the clear vision which Henry George transmits to every fair and intelligent reader of the natural conditions, where "Progress" and "Poverty" are once and for all separated by the very book which describes them, or perhaps from henceforth to be coupled as Progress and Justice, or Progress and Liberty. Let us take heart. The whole earth gives a verdict which cannot lightly be brushed aside; and the code of every primitive people (and the primitive code of every sophisticated people) is Georgetist in basis, while every attempt to legalise injustice must fail, or destroy those who will submit to it

"Truth struck to earth shall rise again,  
The eternal years of God are hers;  
But Error wounded writhes in pain,  
And dies amid her worshippers."

### THE DANISH LEAGUE OF JUSTICE (From the General to the Particular)

At the opening session of the Copenhagen Conference Mrs. SIGNE JÖRNER spoke of the work being done by the Danish association known as the "League of Justice," whose objects she said were to establish the "State of Justice" in place of the "State of Power" or the "State of Force" that now prevailed. The League of Justice stood for complete freedom from taxation and the collection of the whole economic rent of land, with equal and free participation in the government of public affairs—under the (proxy) system of the "free franchise," which came into the picture on the last session of the Conference and could not be explained here except at much length. In the field of economic life, the League of Justice, Mrs. Björner said, would vindicate fully the freedom of the individual and draw a clear and certain boundary around the functions of the State, so that the State would no longer interfere, as it harmfully does to-day, in those activities best performed by the individual. In order to get at the people when they were most awake, namely at election times, the League of Justice had formed a separate political party and were putting up candidates whenever there was an appeal to the voters.

The programme of the Danish "League of Justice" was thus sketched in general terms, but it would have been a help to the Conference if the practical policy for achieving these economic aims had been defined. There are differences of opinion within the League. They are all willing to proceed by the progressive (step by step) repeal of taxes on industry and the gradual adoption of the policy of land value taxation. The question at issue among them is the "all at once" plan on which the Justice League was founded in 1921. It is in their literature and was proclaimed at the last General Election, but the plan is a negation

of the whole principle of land value taxation, because it involves compensation to landowners—at an amount estimated to be equivalent to half the present selling value of the land. It is a scheme which means in effect that the whole economic rent of land would be left untouched in private hands for a period of at least ten years from the appointed day; and the compensation was and is (on the plan) to be obtained partly from a capital levy on all wealth, and partly from the disposal of all State and municipal undertakings—railways, tramways, schools, gas works, etc., etc. This plan is now shelved by the responsible spokesmen only in so far as they maintain that if the "all at once" scheme was adopted, compensation to the landowners from the sources already named, would have to be given. Members of the International Conference are free to form their own opinion of such confusions and contradictions. What it all has to do with the plain and straightforward policy of the Taxation of Land Values and Free Trade, is difficult to see.

A. W. M.

### THE STATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL Review of Mr. Maynard Keynes' Book "The End of Laissez Faire."\*

By W. R. LESTER, M.A.

Mr. Keynes is a lucid writer and interesting to boot. Nor can his ability be called in question. As a rule he leaves his readers in no doubt either as to his premises or his conclusions, but we rise from a perusal of this small book with a sense of mystification and a feeling that the author has made no serious effort to come to close quarters with the subject he discusses. The impression left is that, while his aim is to discredit those who base their social philosophy on the beneficence and harmony of the natural order, he is at pains to avoid any direct frontal attack on them and, instead, adopts a peculiar method of ironical insinuation which to us is far from convincing. The problem to which he addresses himself is as to what the organized state should take upon itself and what it should leave to individual exertion. The drawing of this line he describes as "perhaps the chief task of economists at this hour" and still, by his own confession, he fails to draw it, finding himself unable to do more than cite a few quite unrelated examples of things which he thinks should not be left to individual enterprise and which should therefore be undertaken by the State. From beginning to end there is no sign that Mr. Keynes has discovered any guiding principle and nowhere does he rise above the mere exponent of expediency. To quote his own words:—

"We cannot settle on abstract grounds, but must handle on its merits in detail what Burke termed 'one of the finest problems in legislation, namely, to determine what the State should take upon itself to direct by public wisdom, and what it ought to leave, with as little interference as possible, to individual exertion'."

Could opportunism go further than this?

Having adopted such a premise, he disqualifies himself for drawing any clear line of demarcation, though later on, seeming to realize how unsatisfactory this is, he ventures on the tentative suggestion that progress may lie in growth of the recognition of semi-autonomous bodies within the State whose criterion of

\* The Hogarth Press, London, W.C.1, 2s.

action is solely the public good and from whose deliberations motives of private advantage are excluded. We must recognize, he suggests, that "big enterprise" has a tendency to work more and more in the public interest and less and less in the interests of mere stockholders. Perhaps, he says, the last concern of the Bank of England is the amount of dividend it should pay to its stockholders. These big enterprises are, as time goes on, automatically tending to "socialize" themselves and their tendency provides us with a clue to the solution of our problem. In its encouragement progress lies. Banks, insurance companies, and perhaps even railway companies he cites as examples. Over and above he gives three quite disconnected examples of what it is important the State should undertake:—

- (1) Deliberate control of the currency.
- (2) Determination by the State of the scale on which individuals should save and the amount of foreign investment which should be permitted.
- (3) State control of population.

As a guide to any constructive policy based on any sound principle we can discover in these examples no value whatever.

But the main part of the book is devoted to a rather oblique criticism of Laissez Faire which the author, quite unwarrantably, assumes has not only been tried, but has failed. In nothing he says does he show any recognition of the fact that Laissez Faire is not now and never has been the policy of any State. The necessary condition of Laissez Faire is that there should be a fair field and no favour, or in other words, that there should be equality of opportunity and reward according to useful service rendered. A fair field, equality of opportunity, equal chance for all, must exist before the Laissez Faire policy can come into operation and these conditions have never yet been permitted in any civilized society. Every so-called civilized society both now and in the past has legalized special privileges and monopolies which give advantage to some men over others from their very birth. The policy of Laissez Faire has no meaning unless it be the sweeping away of special privilege, and the recognition of the right of each man to the full product of his exertion free from control and meddling by the State. To think that in a society which gives some the power to make others pay for the use of the earth, or even to debar them from it completely, the policy of Laissez Faire is in operation is to think in contradictory terms. Since present social arrangements deny equality of opportunity and equality of opportunity is the necessary condition of Laissez Faire, Laissez Faire does not exist. What does not exist cannot be "ended" so Mr. Keynes must find another title for his book.

Mr. Keynes is contemptuous of those schools which base their teachings on the beneficence and harmony of the natural order. He will have no truck with the notion that the interests of the individual harmonize with the interests of society. To him the natural order spells chaos and contradictions, which demand the control of clever people in authority who will protect society from itself. We suggest that this attitude grows out of the mistaken assumption that the evils to-day existing arise from Laissez Faire. This assumption is unwarranted. We do not now, nor have we in the past, allowed the laws of nature to work in freedom. We enact human statutes which obstruct them and thus we bring on ourselves the evils which Mr. Keynes mistakenly attributes to the working of natural law. Not till man-made law is brought into harmony with nature's law shall we experience in practice the goodness of these last. A curious example of Mr. Keynes' writing that natural law in social life is, to-day,

allowed to take its course in freedom, and that the suffering we see around us is due to the unhampered action of these laws is his story of the giraffes. Some giraffes in a herd have, he says, long necks and other short necks. The result is that the long-necked crop the leaves up to the greatest height, leaving the short-necked to starve because they cannot reach high enough. This, he says, is the natural law, and must be controlled, for "if we have the welfare of the giraffes at heart, we must not overlook the sufferings of the shorter necks, who are starved out, or the sweet leaves which fall to the ground and are trampled underfoot in the struggle, or the overfeeding of the long-necked ones, or the evil look of anxiety or struggling greediness which overcasts the mild faces of the herd." Mr. Keynes would have us believe that these sufferings actually occur in the giraffe world and are the inevitable outcome of unrestricted competition or Laissez Faire existing. This is quite a new reading of natural history and we would seriously ask whether any naturalist has ever noted such happenings amid natural surroundings. The fact can easily be verified that normally in their natural surroundings there is abundance of food both for the long and the short-necked and that such a thing as starving out the latter is unknown. The long-necked may, indeed, crop the higher and more succulent leaves, but this does not mean starvation for the short-necked, because there still remains plenty for all. The overfeeding of some, the starvation, evil faces and anxiety of others, exist only in the imagination of Mr. Keynes, and this is so because in the giraffe world, long and short necks are allowed equal chance to get at the leaves. Were private property in virgin forests to become an institution in giraffe communities there would at once appear among them the evil consequences which Mr. Keynes in his imaginings pictures falsely as already there. But these calamities would not be due to any difference in length of neck. They would be due to private ownership by some of what is equally needed by all.

Turning from the herd of giraffes to the human herd, providence has provided in lavish abundance for all of us and did we—respecting the equal right of all to live and to labour—faithfully pursue the much derided policy of Laissez Faire we would not witness those troubles which Mr. Keynes attributes to "nature's red in tooth and claw," but which, in truth, are the fruits of those special privileges which society has created and defends.

This failure to trace effect to cause is the weakness of the book and is apparent throughout. It is this reason why it has little value as a contribution to the advance of Social Science.

The Conference membership roll printed in our last issue was supplemented by 56 names received after we went to press. These latest additions comprised: from Denmark, 33; Germany, 4; the United States, 4; Great Britain, 4; and from Sweden, Norway, Holland, Austria, Belgium, South Africa and Australia, 11. The names include: Sir Henry Ballantyne (Haddington); John Z. M. Hamilton (London); Miss Sadie Bourne (Burslem); F. E. Harrison (Stoke-on-Trent); A. Mackie Niven (South Africa); F. T. Hodgkiss and J. A. Hendry (Australia); D. de Clerq (Holland); Director Carl Strinz, E. Remmers, Willy Menzel and George Müller (Germany); L. Spangler (Austria); Clemens Gerhard (Belgium); Halfdan Hansen (Norway); Svante A. Bäckström (Sweden); Miss Grace I. Colbron, J. A. Hamm, Dr. Mark Milliken (U.S.A.). The total membership roll was 402.