

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

To the Editor, "The Single Tax."

51 Polmadie Street, Polmadie, Glasgow.

Dear Sir,—Man, as Carlyle says, is "emphatically a proselytising creature," who when he gets a new idea seeks to give it circulation by imparting it to others. So an unknown friend, with a new idea and of a proselytising disposition, sent me across the Atlantic, from the supposed Republic of the United States of America, some literature advocating what is called the proportional preferential system of voting as a means of having all, or nearly all, voters represented in Parliament. I think I understand the theory of this system of voting, as I studied it before now. Its advocates contend that by the present system of voting the majority of voters are disfranchised. From their point of view I believe this is true.

But being a proselytising creature myself, I would like to impress them with the idea that it would be much better not to be represented at all in Parliament. To be represented in Parliament, at best, is only doing by proxy what men could do much better themselves. Parliaments by proxy favour injustice, class, and privilege. And the electing of representatives for the purpose of legislating is a proceeding by which the people disfranchise themselves, and put themselves under the rule of despotism. It is a proceeding by which the people disclaim their own right to themselves. In writing against the French Revolution Burke said: "The people of England disclaim such a right, and that they will resist the practical assertion of it with their lives and fortunes." For people to resist the practical assertion of their own right to themselves seems to me an insane proceeding, yet it is what actually takes place at the present day, not only in England but also in America and throughout the world generally.

But Nature will not exempt men from responsibility, and where there is responsibility there must be right. Natural laws act unerringly in accordance with the design and decree of the omniscient power we call God. It does not recognise proxy in Parliaments or anything else, or exempt men collectively, as nations, from being subject to its power. If a man puts his hand in fire he cannot vote a representative to feel the pain for him, or if a whole nation would do the same thing fire would not cease to cause its natural effect.

Men do not require to be represented in Parliament to enable them to know they are hungry, or when they need clothing, or when they need shelter. Nature enables them to know. Men do not require to be represented in Parliament to enable them to know their local needs nor yet their national ones. Nature enables them to know. Men do not require to be represented in Parliament to enable them to grow food, or to manufacture clothing, or to build houses or ships or make railways or any other necessary production. The study of natural laws enables them to produce all these things. Men do not require to be represented in Parliament to know the value of what they produce. It is human desires, by means of competition, that alone can determine value. What men really need is an equitable access to the land, the "storehouse" which Pope Leo XIII. says "Nature owes to man." And the only possible means of securing this is for the people to appropriate the rent of land according to the method of the *Single Tax*, the only system by which men can become truly enfranchised.

To agitate for a sham enfranchisement can only be but a waste of time, and delay the education of the people, for the public mind shows itself incapable of giving thought to more than one leading question at a time. And to believe that men are enfranchised by being represented in Parliament is grossly absurd.

The real necessity for voting is not for the making of laws, but to give expression to men's natural needs and desires.

When men are sufficiently educated to understand the truths of social and economic science it will not matter whether the proportional preferential system of voting is better than the present system or not. When men are truly enfranchised, and know that they are so, they will not be content with systems devised by men who do not know that they are slaves. The systems of enfranchised men must be in harmony with the principles of freedom.

Nations must have executives. But the executives of the people should only be the servants of the people. No employer, or company of employers, would deem their interests safe by putting themselves under the absolute power of their employees as the people put themselves under the power of their representatives in Parliament. And surely there is not a greater natural necessity in the one case more than the other. If the Creator had found His own laws so imperfect that He deemed it necessary that some men should make laws for the rest of mankind, surely He would have put an indelible mark upon them so that they might be recognised as having His authority.

It is not enough to have individual freedom. We must have collective freedom, locally as well as nationally. The rights of local collectivism are as distinguishable from national collectivism as the rights of the individual are from both. The freedom of the one is not complete without the freedom of the other.

If men were both individually and collectively enfranchised by means of the single tax there would be no need for being represented in Parliament, and means could be devised by which every man could do his own voting with more reliance and less trouble and expense than by the present mode by proxy.

It is only injustice that needs so much law-making. For a social system based on just principles God's laws are sufficient. They are not revealed through Parliaments, but through honesty and a desire to be as just to others as we would have others be to ourselves. And they are as applicable to nations as they are to individuals. Unlike man-made laws, they do not require to be altered, and will last for all time.

God is no blunderer. And His power is not so limited that He was only able to make laws to do the greatest good to the greatest number. They were made to do justice to the whole number. The idea of doing the greatest good to the greatest number seems to me to rest on the fallacy that men individually have no natural rights, and that collectively, as nations, they are not subject to natural or moral law, which means that though individually they may profess a belief in God, that collectively they must act as atheists.

Nations may call themselves Christian and build their temples on the groans and suffering of those they plunder, but until they put faith in the providence of God, and recognise Him by their social arrangements, they are but infidels and anarchists who refuse the enjoyments of true civilisation.—Yours truly,

ARCH. M'DONALD.

If the new Czar were to ask me what I should advise him to do, I would say to him, "Use your autocratic power to abolish landed property in Russia, and to introduce the Single Tax System, and then give up your power and give the people a liberal constitution.—Count Leo Tolstoi.

HOWEVER diverse their views on philosophical and religious matters, most men are agreed that the proportion of good and evil in life may be very sensibly affected by human action. I never heard anybody doubt that the evil may be thus increased or diminished; and it would seem to follow that good must be similarly susceptible of addition or subtraction. Finally, to my knowledge, nobody professes to doubt that, so far as we possess a power of bettering things, it is our paramount duty to use it and to train all our intellect and energy to this supreme service of our kind.—Professor Huxley.