

Who Are the Real Radicals?

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Written for the London League of Young Liberals

IN 1949-50 an idea began to permeate the ranks of the younger members of the Party. Within a few months a new school of thought was born. To those conditioned to collectivism practically from birth the doctrine was novel and strange; a philosophy of freedom based on the individual rather than the group.

These radicals, as they became known, found anything but ready acceptance by their fellows of the doctrine they preached, for they were attempting to alter a method of thinking based on the rigidities of convention rather than logic. With axiom, analogy and argument they were attempting to combat the impressed fallacy which had been given a facade of the factual by constant reiteration; the half-truth labelled irrefutable by virtue of the fact that it had never been refuted.

Nevertheless, converts were found and it was noticeable that the most implacable opponents frequently became the staunchest supporters. The movement gained strength.

Doctrine of the "Group"

For many years the doctrine of the "group" had reigned triumphant—the idea that what was good for the greatest number was necessarily the best: that 70 per cent of the people, or 92 per cent, or 53 per cent, meant something important: that 67 per cent was a justification, that 84 per cent was proof; that the individual's highest duty was to be a useful member of the social whole.

At last this tradition was challenged. Each man and woman, argued the radicals, was a unique individual, and the fact that a percentage of the people had done a particular thing or would probably do a certain thing was an irrelevant statistic.

The translation of the philosophy into a practical system of everyday living was the next step, and by relating their actions to their principles rather than to expediency, a non-conflicting program was built up.

Rights of the Individual

The rule for behavior was a simple but all-embracing one. It was that each individual had a right to do precisely what he wished so long as he did not restrict another individual's equal right.

In the economic sphere the rules were equally simple and equally as just. They were that men and goods were entitled to move freely without let or hindrance; that each individual was entitled to all he produced; and that each individual was entitled to an equal share of natural resources.

Therefore, controls, restrictions, conscription, graduated income tax, subsidies, indirect taxes and the other paraphernalia of a planned society are anathema to the radical.

By the same token the whole concept of the Welfare State is regarded with contempt by the radical, for he believes, not in alleviating a harm already done, but rather in preventing any further harm. He views the Welfare State in much the same way as he would view a "solution" to the road accident toll which consisted of a campaign to enlarge the casualty departments of the hospitals.

The radical's economy is controlled by natural laws of supply and demand—laws, which

work more finely and precisely than is possible in a "controlled" economy. The action of the price mechanism accomplishes with its almost imperceptible movements feats of control impossible to the bureaucrat.

It must not be thought that the removal of all restrictions produces a just state—it doesn't. The general rate of wages upon which all higher rates are based will tend to a minimum close to the margin of production and on the other hand vast fortunes will be accumulated which will bear no relation to effort exerted.

The reason for this is simple, and has been appreciated by people as different in outlook as Winston Churchill and Karl Marx.

It is that while the return to labor and capital—i.e., wages and interest—are determined by supply and demand, in a free society, the return to land—i.e., economic rent—is not, by virtue of the fact that land is natural monopoly.

As man progresses by discovery and invention, by techniques and cooperation, by skill and initiative, so does the return to land increase, tapping off the increased wealth which should by right belong to those who produce it.

Therefore a method must be found of providing "an equal share of natural resources." This method is called land value taxation and it is the foundation of a just economy for free men.