

# OUR DAILY BREAD

(This classic lecture by Dr. Viggo Starcke, the Danish philosopher and historian, is to be reprinted as a pamphlet)

**H**UMAN EMOTIONS are older than human reason.

Religion and ethics are very old; their age is measured in terms not of centuries but of geological periods, so old are they. Thought, science and intelligence are very young, only a few thousand years old.

Human hope for material progress is based upon the evolution and further clarification of thought, science and technique. Through them man can learn to master the forces of nature, but they cannot give him mastery of himself. To know thyself, to control thyself and ennoble thyself, is an art to be cultivated as such.

Human hope for social progress and citizenship, for growth in happiness and dignity is based upon man's feelings for right and wrong. The great and fundamental questions of existence are all very simple and everyone is able to understand them. Small details are often complicated and difficult of understanding. Some people cannot see that. They are so absorbed in details of small things that they do not see the great things at all. The shrewd Italian statesman Machiavelli understood that. He said: "People are always provoked by small injustices but never by great injustices."

Therefore, if we have to speak to common people about great and external things, it is important to make quite clear what we mean by the words right and wrong, justice and injustice, righteousness, love and charity. Reason can explain the difference between these ideas. It depends upon the heart which way you will follow.

## **Justice**

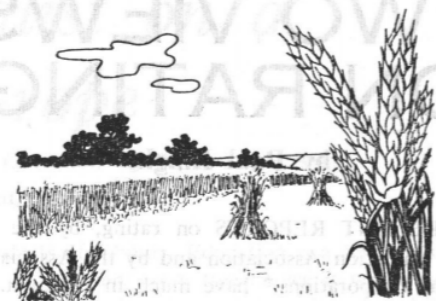
Let me try to illustrate this in a simple way; if I have access to a working-place, some land to work upon, and if I plough the field, harrow the soil, sow the seed, harvest the crop, grind the flour and bake the bread—my daily bread—then there is a voice within me saying: "My Bread is Mine!"

If you also have a working-place where you earn your daily bread, you also say: "My Bread is Mine!"

We all feel that this is right. The sentence: "My Bread is Mine!"—that is the beginning of justice.

## **Self Righteousness**

If I am interested only in my own bread and in my own right, it is a narrow and limited sense of justice. It is the righteousness of the Pharisees, and except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, we shall



in no case enter that form of human living for which we are created.

## **Righteousness**

I want the right to use a working-place and the right to the bread I have produced. You want the same rights for yourself. Most people hear the voice: "My Bread is Mine!" But if we listen, there is another voice within us which bids us "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!" This voice speaks not only about my right, but also about your right. It speaks of righteousness and not only self righteousness. It says not only: "My Bread is Mine!" but also: "Your Bread is Yours!"

## **Love**

Then you feel that justice is filled with a warm and human feeling for your neighbour. "Your Bread is Yours!" This is love. There is no greater love in man than this: to give to other people, your fellow men, the same right, freedom and opportunities as you want for yourself, and to let them earn their own bread in their own way, so that they can be masters of their own bread.

## **Injustice**

If you have done your work and earned your bread, and I stretch out my hand and take it, saying: "Your Bread is Mine!" we all feel that this is wrong. It is theft and robbery. Theft and robbery are punishable at law. Therefore I can try to get your bread in other ways. In olden days I could enslave you or make you my serf. Under modern, normal social conditions I can do it in a more genteel way, although with the same result.

I can own my own land, my own working-place, but I can also own the land that is necessary for you and for others. If you and others have no access to land and employment, the result is unemployment. Then I can say: "You are allowed to work here, but I shall have a greater or smaller part of your daily bread. Your Bread is Mine!"

It is theft, it is robbery, even though the law allows it. Law and righteousness are not the same thing, but they ought to be, and they certainly shall be.

## **Charity**

Even if you have access to a working-place, you can have a bad crop; your harvest can fail; you can become ill or crippled, so that you are not able to earn your own bread. Then in your extremity, perhaps, my warm heart

tells me to help you. I may take my own bread and give it to you, saying: "My Bread is Yours!"

This is charity. Some people believe that charity is the same as love and righteousness. It is not so. Charity is lovely, and charity, alms and subsidies can be necessary where people are not able to help themselves. But how much better it is when charity is not necessary, when poverty, hunger and unemployment do not exist. We cannot do without charity in catastrophes and under exceptional conditions, but we cannot do with charity alone.

Charity can be dangerous for me, because I run the risk of beginning to pride myself that I am good. It can give me a false feeling of good conscience, false because I try to relieve poverty and unemployment without trying to discover or to remove the causes that lead to such conditions.

Charity can be dangerous for you, too, if you become accustomed to assistance and look upon it as a right. Your independence and self-respect will be lost and the mainspring in your character broken.

### **Social Welfare**

Your crop can fail and disease can break you down so that want and scarcity come to your house. My warm heart tells me to help you, but my cold brain tells me to do so, if I can, without myself incurring any great sacrifices. Then I go to my neighbour's house, around the back door, take his bread and give it to you saying: "His bread is Yours!"

That is Social Welfare, Social Legislation, Social Security, and all that. It is distorted charity in that I am trying to help you by doing injustice to my neighbour. Politically applied, it is the politicians' excuse for refusing to promote the reforms that can remove the causes of poverty. In this way political life is corrupted and develops into strife between parties, those gaining power with your vote who can make the best show of giving subsidies only to you and imposing taxes only on your neighbours.

### **Community**

The key to social life is co-operation. It is an institution so natural and so obvious that you can depend upon it in freedom. If we work together freely under free contract and in mutual confidence, we are able to produce much more bread and many more goods. We can pool our bread and wealth in fellowship, community or communion. "Our Bread is Our Bread!" If we thus freely pooled our goods it would be all right.

### **Communism**

If we were forced to do so it would be a very different thing. Compulsion and constraint could produce a pooling of goods so as to say: "Our Bread is Ours" but only apparently, for the real expression should be: "Your Bread is Ours!"

Communism preaches that each member shall work according to his capacity and receive according to his needs. But as my ability is not as great as yours, I produce less than you do. In return, my need and my appetite is greater; in fact, it could be enormous. There-

fore, if we pool our products under direction of the state and divide the result in some equal way, I eat my share of bread immediately and say to you: "Let us share again!" Communism is organised and socialised injustice.

### **Equality**

Men's abilities differ. Let us suppose that we have the same share of land, of equal size and quality, but that we differ in character, habits and efficiency. You are clever and energetic; you rise early in the morning and work until late in the evening. I am lazy and incompetent; I sleep until late in the morning, and in the evening I play cards at the inn.

You are able to produce three loaves a day. I am able to produce only one loaf a day. But envy is in my heart and kind politicians are hurt in their tender feelings. They declare that man has not created himself; some are born clever and gifted, others are born simpletons. That is right. But then they conclude that we have to equalise, make conditions even, be "egalitarians," and that is not right.

You produce three loaves and I produce one loaf, which, if the total were divided, would be two for each of us. It certainly would be equality—equality in conditions—but it would not be justice, should the kind politicians take one of your loaves and give it to me.

The result is not even practical. I can manage to live on one loaf a day and when I can have one of yours in subsidies, why should I rise at all tomorrow? Absenteeism and shirking is the result. The next day I produce nothing at all. And you exclaim, annoyed; "Here I am working hard the whole day. I toil and moil, I take the risk, but the state takes the profit. Why trouble so much?" The next day you produce only two. The community is thus made poorer. We see it in every country, in every branch of activity, in every working place.

### **Planning**

If you are clever and I am not, we resolve to put you in office so that you can rule and govern, organise and direct, sitting at your desk writing papers, proclamations, schemes and budgets, collecting statistics, conducting enquiries and preparing five-year plans. I have to work, obey and suffer, reading the forms you are writing, writing the forms you are reading, seriously hampered by restrictions, rationing, allocations and control. The result is less bread, worse bread. This is the Planned Economy, Red Tape, Bureaucracy, State Control, Socialism. "My Paper is your Bread."

### **Our Daily Bread**

Love and justice are ethical, and they are an important part of religion. They are not only right; they are commonsense, practical and productive. As long as we keep saying: "What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" we are like the heathen and shall never be able to get all these things.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by spirit and inspiration, by love and righteousness. Man cannot live without his daily bread. Therefore we pray this simple human petition: "Give us this day our daily bread!"

In a world so rich, so great and so blessed as this, it should be possible. Here is room enough, here is sunshine enough, here is technique enough, but here is not love and righteousness enough.

We have still among us fellow beings living in poverty, in unemployment, in bad houses or without a roof over their heads. We hear of wars and rumours of wars and that nation shall arise against nation. Today we are able to produce more than we can eat, more than we can drink, more than we can use; and still we have people who hunger and thirst and feel cold. We live in a world of abundance and misery, of progress and poverty.

Let us hunger and thirst!—but let us hunger and thirst after righteousness! And right is this: The bread you have produced is yours. The bread I have produced is mine! *But the pre-requisite for every form of daily bread is that that which none of us has produced must belong to all of us—the riches of the earth and the powers of nature revealed in the value of land.*

Remember the multitudes who were sitting on the slopes of the mountains, the humble shepherds, the poor labourers, the hardy fishermen—people who had lived and worked and suffered mutely and meekly in poverty; they raised their bowed heads when they were told: “Blessed are the meek! for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness! for they shall be filled.”

All ways and methods, except one, have been tried. It is righteousness! Let us try that. Then all these things shall be added unto us. There will be bread enough for everybody—and there will remain fragments to fill more than twelve baskets full.

## THE GREAT PANIC AND HISTORY

(Continued from page 125)

So land monopoly has been and remains an influence without which historical events cannot adequately be explained. It explains how the planned economy universally condemned in the West a half century ago is now accepted as evidence of progress.

The historian can trace effects and causes but he is no crystal-gazer able to foresee the exact reaction of opinion to events. The present chaos of industrial strife must herald some change but what direction it will take is not yet apparent. Events in Russia and the Communist states might however give some indication. Long experience has taught these governments that human nature cannot forever be thwarted, that the ultimate urge to work is not to be stimulated by the humbug of targets, export drives and to supply planners with material, but to enjoy the fruits of one's labour. While the West continues to increase taxes and controls the Communist states show the first signs of reducing them; and those peoples have not been educated to believe that private monopoly of land is sacrosanct. Tolstoy hoped that despite “the noisy teaching of socialism” the Russian people, living closer to natural conditions, might realise earlier than the West that land value is the property of the community.

## “ENOUGH FOR CHARITY”

A MAN whose estate has cost £297,058 in death duties stated in his will, that he was leaving no charitable legacies because he considered taxes and death duties would make adequate contribution to public assistance.

Mr. Frederick William Lund, of Petworth, Sussex, who died in July, aged ninety, left estate in Great Britain valued at £463,962 gross, £455,409 net.

He says he wants to put on record, as Lord Moyne did, “that I consider the present rates of income tax and surtax and death duties secure that my estate will make an adequate contribution to the cost of services of public assistance which formerly was left to private philanthropy.”

—The Guardian, August 28.

## AID TO LAND OWNERS

AID to underdeveloped countries frequently takes the form of scientific advice and aid to increase the productivity of land. Recent claims by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of success in their endeavours in this direction should however be seen against the background of land tenure. In Pakistan, for instance, where much of this aid has gone, it is obvious that the benefits are not all going to the tillers of the soil.

An enquiry from our office to the F.A.O. as to the system of land tenure in Pakistan has brought the following reply:

“In 1950 an Acquisition and Tenancy Act was passed in East Pakistan under which landlords who had been renting land from the government were allowed to own up to 33 acres. Other land was distributed among the cultivators on the following basis: the land is still government-owned but in effect the farmers have all the rights of land-owners, that is, they may obtain loans and mortgages against the land and cultivate it as if it were their own. They pay land revenue on their crops to the government.

“A third category of cultivator forms the largest group — 40 to 50 per cent. They are sharecroppers who rent land from the landlords or from other cultivators. They share the crop on a 50-50 basis with the landowner. Their leases are renewed yearly so there is little permanency in their situation.”

## COMMONWEAL SOCIETY

THE Commonwealth Land Party, founded in 1923, and led for many years by the late J. W. Graham Peace with the assistance of many devoted friends, later became the Commonweal Society with George Edwards as Treasurer and acting Secretary. Mr. Edwards recently passed over to the United Committee the records and books of the Society together with the small remaining funds.