

Social Justice and the Jew

IF there is anything that gives Judaism a distinguishing mark among the religions of the world it is its insistence on the primary importance of social justice as between man and man. Social justice has always been a characteristic of true Judaism, evinced at various times in varied surroundings and in divers ways. The laws of the Prophets and the Rabinnical writings have ever been a source of inspiration to the Jewish race in all their political activities. Social justice in ancient Judaism was not only one point, but composed the chief part of religious life; and the more profoundly religious knowledge penetrated, the more weight was laid upon this, until the prophets declared absolutely that religion and a knowledge of God were identical with social justice. Thus, already nineteen hundred years ago, Philo of Alexandria, who desired to prove the excellence of Judaism to educated heathen by showing the contrast between Judaism and heathenism, quoted to this end the social laws of the Bible in his writings to the Greeks. "Here you have," he tells them, "the fundamental ideas of Judaism. What can you, from the proud eminence of your culture, set up in comparison with it?" Philo was certainly the true son of his age, and acted in harmony with the opinion of his readers when he named his work "On the Love of One's Neighbor." Had he entitled his work "On Justice," his Pagan readers would not have understood him. They did not know that justice can mean something higher—a truth greater than that in their own law books. Philo was, therefore, obliged, if he wished to prove the superiority of the Jewish law, to praise its love of man. At the same time he desired to refute the favorite accusation against the Jews that they hated their fellowmen.

But few of the great social reformers, however, were conscious of treading in the footsteps of the Jewish pioneers. It was reserved for one of the most modern and far-seeing political economists, Henry George, the author of "Progress and Poverty," to show the influence of ancient Judaism on the social education of humanity and to recognize in Moses a hero whom the world must hail as a deliverer. It is inspiring yet humiliating that Henry George, who was not a member of our faith, should see more clearly than any other the greatness of the social law in ancient Judaism, and that he should cite it as an example to be copied even in the present day. Many Jews who work unceasingly in all social tasks and thereby feel themselves to be essentially modern perhaps for this very reason, refrain from studying the past of their own people. These same Jews are filled with surprise when they learn in a lecture or read in a pamphlet, or as probably happens very seldom when they hear in a sermon that the archives of Judaism have a deep significance for their own times, and not merely for divine worship, or archaeological research.

What, then, briefly stated, was the message of Henry George, which is today drawing under its banner such ardent and growing bands of men of every faith and race throughout the civilized world? The simple proposition that the earth, like the air, sun and water, is the gift of God

to all men present and to be, to which each has an equal right, for his sustenance, use and enjoyment. How do we know that each has this equal right? Because without the use of the earth no human being could exist, and as it is impossible to think otherwise than that each has an equal right to existence, it follows that each has an equal right to the use of the earth. Therefore, the granting of ownership of land to any individual is an unjustifiable breach of the moral law. Similarly, deductions by way of tax or otherwise from the result of man's labor are likewise an infraction of the moral right of the laborer to the product of his labor. In other words, the land is held "in usufruct" by the community, and in trust for the generations of men born and unborn. Wealth in every case results from the application of man's labor to land, and belongs inviolably to the individual who created it. Man did not create the earth—God created it; therefore no man-made law can justly make it man's. What a man produces belongs wholly to him; *his labour is his title deed*. Is it, then, necessary that each should have an equal portion of land in order that the rights of all may be secured? Not at all. That end may be accomplished by taking the value of land which arises from the existence of organized society, and which crystallizes itself in the form of rent, for communal purposes. After this war men in every country will be prepared for bold action in the reforming of their respective laws. Here is the opportunity to re-echo the principles laid down by our fathers and sustained in the economic proposals of Henry George. In this work, he assured them, they would be following the noble example of other Jews, who not only worked for these principles, but died for them, Max Hirsch and Joseph Fels, who, after long years of labor, bore final testimony with their lives. In this they followed their leader, who said:

"The truth I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance. If that could be, it would have been accepted long ago. If that could be, it would never have been obscured. But it will find friends—those who will toil for it; suffer for it; if need be, die for it. This is the power of truth."—From an Address by L. P. Jacobs, at Toynbee Hall, London.

War Taxation—Will Land Values be Taxed Next?

DURING our various discussions of National problems at this Congress, no reference was made to bills which have been introduced in both the Senate and the House for a Federal Tax on idle land as a means of raising a portion of the war revenue. Thus far these bills have not made any progress, but since the plan has been under consideration by some of our law makers, it is proper, in my opinion, that the subject shall be discussed by us at this Conference.

Senator J. Hamilton Lewis, of Illinois, has offered an amendment to the War Revenue Bill to levy a Federal tax of one per cent. on all the land in the country, and an extra one per cent. on all land that is idle. I am not holding any brief for Senator Lewis's amendment, but I see consider-

able merit in his proposal. I shall attempt to bring out some of the advantages and possibilities of a land tax.

This plan is not a new and novel method for providing public revenue, since the plan has already been adopted by some of the nations at war today. What would be the result of such a tax in this country? Such a tax has the advantage that it cannot be escaped. The machinery for its collection is already established and the expense of collecting it is as low as possible. Whatever revenue is derived from a tax on land, the less taxes will be imposed on business and industry.

With the call of the nation to conserve the food supply, to proceed on a contrary policy is in effect aiding our enemy. By making it unprofitable for any one to own more land than he can work, will make an increased food supply. We are dealing with a strong and efficient foe and we must utilize effective measures in taxing power to win this war.

On this subject, just as Cooley says, in his book on taxation: "Revenue is not the only purpose of taxation. In levying taxes other considerations not only are, but ought to be kept in view. The question being not always exclusively how a certain sum of money can be collected for public expenditure, but how, when and upon what subjects it is wise and patriotic to lay the necessary tax under the existing circumstances, having regard not merely to the replenishing of the treasury, but to the general benefit and welfare of the political society and taking notice thereof therefore of the manner in which the levying and possession of the cash will protect the several interests in the State."

Land has not been reached for taxation to support this war in any way, but why not use publicly created wealth to meet the present war expenses? We have the income tax and the excess profit tax, but a man may have land and it may increase millions in value and he would pay no income tax and no excess profit tax to the government on that increase.

In one county in Delaware, owing to the activities at the munition plants, land values have increased twenty-five million dollars. It does not seem just that a man may secure a great increase in his wealth from land value, which he never earns, and not be obliged to pay his share towards the war expense, while a man receiving a salary of \$3,000 is obliged to contribute.

The Manufacturers' Record, in its issue of October 4th makes the statement: "Produce every bale of cotton, every bushel of grain that can be grown, raise live stock and poultry and keep on raising them, for our allies are hungry and soon will starve if we cannot supply them bread and meat." And the effect of this shortage may soon be felt here. This then makes it highly important that we quickly mobilize all of our forces in order to bring about a decision before the brunt of the fight will be shifted to America. A one per cent. tax on land values would raise over a billion dollars a year. An extra one per cent. tax on all land that is idle will probably raise another half billion. It would, on the other hand, be taking for public use that value which attaches to land by reason of a growth and improvement of a community, making the holding of

land unprofitable to the mere owner and profitable only to the user. It will stimulate the production of food and other necessities by making it unprofitable for any one to own more land than could be put to its best and most practical use. Upon our resources depends the future of democracy.

Whatever revenue is derived from a tax on land values, as before stated, will to this extent lessen the burden of the mediums creating wealth and to this extent will lessen Federal taxation that cripples production and distribution.—Address by William E. Walter, delegate from New Jersey, at the National Tax Association Conference, Atlanta, in November.

A Mystery Not Yet Cleared Up

THE removal so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance. Number 3 of the President's Peace Terms.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10.—President Wilson had no thought of imposing the doctrine of "free trade" on the world in his war aims address. His reference to freedom of trade was intended as a statement in advocacy of an open door and equal treatment for all nations, according to an authoritative interpretation obtained today.—*N. Y. Sun*, Protectionist.

The protective tariff habit is recognized as one of the underlying causes of war. The notion still prevails that trade follows the flag. We have forced it to do so in Porto Rico and the Philippines. Our trade policy is like that of Germany rather than that of Great Britain. But consciousness of responsibility along these lines enters little into the American mind. Only a few persons, dismissed as impractical doctrinaires, recognize the consequences of artificial trade barriers. Even our Bolshevik friends, starting with a clean slate, practically ignore the fact that capital would be under little temptation to be imperialistic if free trade were universal.—*N. Y. Globe*, Independent.

I listened to every syllable of the message when the President delivered it to us and it did not raise the thought of free trade in my mind for an instant. And it does not now, although I have read that third clause over and over since the day of its first utterance to see if I could understand how or why some partisans have managed to interpret it as a recommendation for free trade.—CLAUDE KITCHIN, Democratic House Leader.

And He Knows How to Open Them

FURTHER drastic legislation to conserve resources is sought by extension of government control of all necessities, their production and price, in line with the President's December message. The President also is in favor of opening up the great natural resources of the country.—Special Washington correspondent, *New York World*, Jan. 18, 1918.