

LAND & LIBERTY

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PEACE IMPERATIVES

IN A statement recently issued by the National Peace Council it is declared that the war is a reflection of a crisis in civilization itself; that its ultimate cause lies in the common failure to utilize and control in accordance with the principles of morality the powers and resources which the developments of science and machinery have made available in the modern world; and that it is upon the redemption of this failure that a valid peace depends. "Democracy by definition proclaims," it is said, "the significance of the individual person, the right to a true freedom for all men, irrespective of race or nationality and the reality of the common interest which unites them; but the democratic peoples have so far lacked the faith and the courage to implement these principles."

There follows a programme of reconstruction intended to apply to the whole world by establishing a New International Order with three major features, viz.:

(1) It must be based upon a common standard of social values—a new charter of human rights and obligations to be applied to all peoples irrespective of race or nationality class or creed.

(2) It must establish a new international economic authority (to be developed from existing agencies where these are serviceable) charged with the responsibility of raising the general standard of living and for this purpose of securing a more equitable distribution of raw materials to meet the primary needs of mankind. It must as a corollary liberate the peoples in colonial areas from exploitation and poverty.

(3) It must create a system of political co-operation for the world community based upon far-reaching modifications of national sovereignty, and involve the setting up of an international authority having among other tasks the responsibility of effecting a progressive world disarmament and of controlling in the meantime such armaments as may remain.

Concentrated power of such nature would be impossible of control by the common people, widely dispersed as they are, speaking different languages and holding different opinions. Charged with the responsibility of securing economic conditions that government authority has failed to secure in every country in the world—monarchical, republican, fascist, nazi and communist—the new international economic authority would need to be safeguarded from the competition of individuals or nations. To be effective and preserve co-ordination it would need complete control of all economic activity, so that any desired end could be attained by whatever means might be considered best to maintain a totalitarian world organization under the euphemistic pseudonym of "a system of political co-operation for the world community" in which "far-reaching modifications of

national sovereignty" had already been effected. Such a system could only exist as a monopoly; it could not endure competition, which means there could not be economic liberty.

In spite of the fact that the restriction of economic liberty has failed everywhere, it is taken for granted that the proposed new international economic authority would be certain to succeed. No particular reason is given for thinking so, but those who hate or fear liberty may base their hopes on the total elimination of competition. This is the very negation of democracy. If such a system could be imposed on mankind, how could it be reformed or replaced? And what economic conditions would follow failure? However, the establishment of the new international order is not the first but the last step, the crowning effort to enduring peace. "The new international order," the statement continues, "implies the realization of a better social and industrial order within each country. The problem of international economic co-operation is at root a national rather than an international problem. The modern industrial nation with its millions of undernourished people is unable to consume as rapidly as it can produce. The result is the feverish and provocative struggle for overseas markets and areas of influence, the building up of trade restrictions, and the creation of economic frictions which lead to war."

Frankly, these ideas contribute little to the promotion of a true understanding of the world situation. We are seriously invited to believe that millions of undernourished people can produce food more rapidly than they can consume it, that the under-clad ragged people can produce new clothes more rapidly than they can cast off the old ones, that the people living in slums cannot move out of them as rapidly as they can build good new houses. Even if it were true that all the people could produce everything more rapidly than it could be consumed, why should the result be "the feverish and provocative struggle for overseas markets"? Could they not have a rest or go for a holiday? Are all the people so eager to continue at work, after producing all they can consume, that they send goods to the market just to get rid of them? Could not the unwanted goods be dumped in the sea instead of provoking war by trying to dump them on each other?

This obviously false diagnosis of the world situation leads to a programme of a new social order having as its central objectives:—

(1) A monetary system which makes finance and credit the servant and not the master of the community, and establishes the factor of human need as the governing factor in production and distribution.

(2) The effective social control of the land and other means of production. . . .

(3) The highest standard of life which the productive resources of the community make possible for all its citizens.

That is as far as the statement carries us toward a true understanding of the world situation and a practical policy to rid the world of war and to establish an enduring peace.

The economic problem is the problem of getting a living, which at root is neither national nor international but an individual problem, for it is the individual that lives, feels, thinks, works and dies. It is a problem of procuring an adequate and regular supply of suitable matter and preparing it for use to sustain individual life and gratify individual physical wants.

The earth is provided with an inexhaustible supply of matter suitable for food, clothing, shelter and other

physical wants. It is the only source from which man can produce the things he desires. He can produce things only by the exertion of his mental and physical powers which is the real cost of the products of labour. Man's wants are insatiable but his power to produce is limited. He can never produce enough to satisfy all his wants. He always wants something more and better. He rests not because he could consume no more but because he gets tired working. He is always trying to produce more goods with less labour, that is to get goods cheaper. Hence he makes tools, plants seed, and breeds animals. Hence he seeks co-operation with other men.

The most efficient and far-reaching method of co-operation is by exchanging goods and services in the open markets of the world. Where there is liberty, although living on opposite sides of the earth, men by their labour help each other to get a living by means of world trade. It is each for all and all for each. This system of economic "co-operation for the world community" has grown up through individual effort to get goods cheaper (more goods for less labour) in spite of government opposition and obstruction everywhere.

Liberty is the natural condition essential for the self-preservation of every living creature. Justice is the natural law which decrees that the products of labour are the property of the producers. Peace is not an artificial condition instituted by men, it is the natural state in which men work for a living, the concomitant of liberty and justice. It continues until liberty is infringed or justice is violated by some act of aggression. It is the normal condition to which men tend to return when aggression is stopped. But some unscrupulous men, with much audacity and eager to consume much more than they can produce, pose as superior persons having much more than equal rights and entitled to special privileges which enable them to claim the products of labour without rendering equitable service or any service in exchange. The larger the share taken by the imposters the smaller must be the share that remains with the producers, for nature makes no provision for idlers. As there is no limit to imposition, producers must eventually resist. Imposters appeal to force. Producers co-operate and establish government with superior force to protect their property and to punish the imposters. Imposters organize to seize and control government, turning it into an instrument of oppression and robbery by legalizing their special privileges. The inexorable conflict must continue until imposition is eliminated. The issue is at bottom mental and cannot be settled by violence. It is a question whether imposters can compel or induce the workers to submit to any unjust system that will permanently prevail against the natural law which gives the products of labour to the producers. The workers are not lacking faith and courage but they lack knowledge. Some of them are very easily misled and, hoping to share in the benefits, aid the imposters to control government and legalize many schemes of imposition. Ignorance keeps the workers divided.

The greatest imposition in the world now is land monopoly by means of which landlords obtain the products of labour for permitting the workers to produce something for themselves. The value of land measures the share of the products of labour which the landlords claim as rent. As the proportion of the landlord's share increases the proportion of the workers' share, wages, necessarily decreases. With "the developments of science and machinery" the products of labour are enormously increased, but the effect on

distribution is to increase the value of land (rent), the purchasing power of the landlords, without increasing the value of labour (wages), the purchasing power of the workers.

The landlords are masters of the community because they hold the land without which the community cannot live. Their purchasing power is a governing factor in production to satisfy their desires. Through the growth of land values, their ever increasing incomes gives them control of finance and credit under any monetary system. Bankers are their servants. The results of this conflict between landlords and workers are evictions, vacant land, unemployment, trade restrictions to make goods dear and raise rent, strikes, lockouts, slums, poverty, civil and international war. War is waged not to get rid of goods but to grab land and get rent. While imposters can seize land and draw rent as the result of victory in war, there can be no enduring peace. When the workers come to understand their rights, wars will cease.

The highest standard of life which the productive resources of the community make possible for all the workers (excluding imposters) is what they could produce for themselves under natural conditions of liberty and justice. The most that government can do for the workers is to restore their liberty to produce and exchange such matter as they desire and to protect their property in the products of their labour against aggression from all sorts of imposters, especially the holders of legalized privilege.

The first steps in this direction should be a tax on land values and the abolition of all taxation that restricts the production and exchange of goods. This can be done in Britain as soon as the people will it. Other peoples can follow.

We need a system of education that will induce individual thought instead of drifting with the crowd. We want national liberty with religious, political and economic liberty for the individual. We only need an international organization in order to prevent aggression.

J. H. McG.

TAX REFORM SUGGESTION

To the Editor—The following letter has been sent by me to Bernard Samuel, president of the Philadelphia City Council :—

"You say some new form of taxation will be necessary in the near future, and that little hope can be expected from real estate. I have written you several times before calling your attention to the fact that the city neglects to collect a large part of the value (the rent) of its land, and that this value is made by the presence and activities of the people as a whole. Until the whole of this is taken for public use it is ridiculous to say that nothing more can be drawn from real estate.

"This form of taxation has the merit that it has a beneficial effect on the general welfare—all the other taxes you levy are more or less injurious. It is not an unknown thing either, for it is in pretty general use in the towns and cities of the British Colonies and is working well there.

"If you would collect this people-made revenue and do away with the taxes on buildings, etc., etc., you would offer a big inducement for industries to locate here—they would get cheap building sites and freedom from building and business taxes. What better can you offer them than this?"

HAROLD SUDELL.

Philadelphia.