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OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that the Earth is the birthright of ALL MANKIND.

We recognise that for most purposes it is essential for individuals to have exclusive possession and security of tenure of land.

We believe that those who have exclusive possession of land should COMPENSATE SOCIETY for being excluded therefrom.

We believe that such compensation paid annually would meet the costs of Government and permit Society to abolish all taxes on LABOUR and on goods produced by labour.

A LESSON FROM HISTORY

(The following extract is taken from "Unemployment and the Land" by W. R. Lester (1936). It was distributed by the Quaker Land Value Group, 104 Park Avenue, Wrexham, England.

England of the Middle Ages

We would not put back the hands of the clock; none the less, useful lessons may be learned from the England of the Middle Ages. Historians who record the condition of the people in those days tell us that so long as the common lands existed (they covered one-third of the country's area) there were no unemployed men. But just as the commons were taken from the people and "enclosed", so did the spectre of unemployment begin to raise its head and the "sturdy beggar" infest the highways.

Since then enclosures have steadily grown till today the commons have been practically wiped out from the map of England, and "sturdy beggars" (now called the unemployed) have steadily increased in number till they seem to be looked upon as one of our established institutions, and many of our authorities tell us there is no way out.

Natives, Settlers and Unemployment

Today this same process of enclosure, under another name, is proceeding before our eyes among native tribes in Colonial possessions, with the same dire consequences — disinherited men seeking work at any price. So long as the natives retained their tribal lands, workless men did not and could not exist. These people were under no compulsion to "look for work", for work was to be had on their tribal lands without the asking. When white settlers appeared on the scene — accustomed at home to seeing would-be workers

begging for jobs — great was their surprise. They found the "labour market" short of workers, as they expressed it. These "Blacks" seemed to be fellows of infinite leisure; they seemed to gain a living with little effort, have endless feasts and pow-wows and, from the civilized point of view, to be quite indifferent to work unless when they themselves wanted it, and then it came without the asking. Those White Settlers who wanted cheap labour and plenty of it quickly discovered the cause of this (to them) intolerable situation. They were not long in making the discovery that the tribal lands prevented them from getting cheap labour. So long as the lands are open, the native fights shy of the labour market. Being free to work for himself on the tribal lands, he is not driven by hunger to compete for wages from employers.

So white settlers have set about "civilizing" these people by destroying their tribal land system. They are taking the lands from the natives and wherever they have done so, the result has been abundant supply of "labour on the market" with wages kept down by the competition of landless men, just as they are at home.*

The denial of the right to land means the denial of the right to work, save on the terms of the landowner; and this is as true in civilized society as among primitive races, so named. The power of a section of the community to close Nature's Workshop against labour and capital is everywhere the all-sufficient

first cause of unemployment.

*This is confirmed by evidence given before the Native Labour Commission (Kenya) in 1912-13. Settler after settler came before the Commission and demanded in the most precise terms that the natives should be forced out of "Reserves" to work for wages by cutting down their land so that they should have less than they could live on. Lord Delamere, himself owner of 150,000 acres said: "If this policy is to be continued that every native is to be a landholder of a sufficient area on which to establish himself, then the question of obtaining a satisfactory labour supply will never be settled." The process of reducing men to unemployment and poverty is here stated in all its nakedness and simplicity.

Witnesses also urged that sufficient land should not be granted to provide for increase in native population. In refusing Land an "adequate" supply of labour on the market would be guaranteed.

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