

SYNOPSIS OF PAPER ON
NATURAL
LAW IN SOCIAL LIFE

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A Law of Nature may be defined as a correct deduction from observed phenomena. It is a statement of the facts of existence which is true at all times and in all places. Human laws may or may not agree with it but they cannot alter it. When we find that one phenomenon invariably co-exists with, precedes, or follows another we say: it is a law of Nature. These laws decree that like causes are always followed by like consequences, and that we must act in definite ways if we wish to attain definite results. The more we know of these laws the more we become sure that they are the decree of a supreme intelligence. Design, order and purpose is written all over them. It is not possible to violate them. They contrast in every way with human laws.

Natural laws may be classed as Physical, Economic and Moral. The laws of mechanics are physical laws. The laws of wealth production and distribution are economic laws. The laws of right conduct are moral laws.

The Moral Law covers those rules of conduct which *must* be observed if man is to advance to this highest destiny. These rules are *the rules of living together*. Man cannot exist in isolation from his fellows. He must associate or perish. But association

is only possible when the moral law is respected. Therefore the moral law is *the law of life*. It is the province of moral science to lay bare these rules of conduct which bring goodwill, happiness and life.

We are free agents in so far as we are free to choose whether we shall act in conformity with the moral law or against it, but we are powerless to control the consequences of the actions we choose to take. A higher power than ours determines those consequences. We can choose conditions, but not consequences. In choosing the tree we choose the fruit it will bear, and that explains why the civilisation of today is what it is. It is the

fruit of conditions which we ourselves have chosen. In unequal laws and in legalised privileges which deny the equal right of all to live and to work we have flouted the moral law and sown the seeds which are bearing fruit in division, class hatred and war. Under the conditions we have chosen it is not possible for men to live together in true fellowship — try as they may. We have driven a wedge through Society which divides it into landed and landless, into those who charge for the use of the earth and those who pay for it, into those who *give work* and those who beg for it. Our laws obstruct access to Nature's opportunities for self-employment and reduce men to a bitter struggle for mere leave to work for employers under conditions which make *jobs* scarce. Under such circumstances it is hard for men to regard their job-competing neighbours with a friendly eye.

By natural law is determined how the products of industry should be distributed. And from the natural law of distribution is derived the natural law of property.

The natural law of distribution is

the simple rule that wealth should be distributed among individuals in proportion as they contribute to its production. And the natural law of property is that what each individual contributes to production belongs to him. *What a Man makes is his own*. And this we *know* to be the law because refusal to conform to it brings stoppage of production. Those schools of *advanced thought* which look with suspicion on private property and have even called it robbery have been led to this position by confusion of private property in labour products with private property in land. They fail to see that natural property cannot include property in land. It is this identification of the selfish interests of landed property with property in labour products which has led to the condemnation of private property of every kind by many who see the wrongs of our present civilisation, but have not traced them to their source. Property in land is but legalised power to confiscate natural property. It is the very negation of true property.

So it comes that extremes meet. The vested interests which defend private property in land are joined by those *advanced thinkers* who de-

nounce property of every kind in attacking true property rights. For to take from those who produce and share out equally among all is a violation of men's rights just as is private property in the earth itself.

The besetting sin of the civilisation of today is that it fails to recognise that what a man makes is his own.

Through Georgeian principles alone can men free themselves from their chains and conditions be established where the inherent goodness of human nature will have the chance of expressing itself. Those principles put into practise will give man the chance

of learning *the art of living together* and are the essential conditions to the realisation of lasting peace.

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