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“The Warning from France” — Benefits Derived from Land Value Rating in Sydney — Economic Planning in Practice — Monopoly Competition and Freedom — A Communist View of Germany's Plight

PACIFISTS AND TOTALITARIANISM

It is perhaps a truism to say that one of the evil effects of a crisis such as the present is that it diverts men's minds from the path of progress and inclines them to policies starkly retrogressive. This may be one of the penalties we have to pay for our sins. It would not so greatly matter were the backward swing confined to quarters already reactionary, but it matters very much when the minds of those who in the past have earned reputations for their progressive views on social policy are affected.

We think we are justified in quoting as such a case the newly appointed editor of the *Peace News*, Mr Middleton Murry, who in the July issue of that journal contributes an article entitled “The Crisis of Pacifism”—his first from the editorial chair. In this he urges his readers to accept as inevitable the coming of Totalitarianism throughout the world. We are, he says, involved in the death agony of a whole liberal democratic civilisation. The throes of the death agony are also the throes of a new birth—a new social order corresponding to the new economic technique. This new order we are told is not to be got rid of by branding it as “totalitarian”; we may comfort ourselves by calling it a centrally controlled and planned society, but it has come to stay; total war has not caused this development but only precipitated it; the real culprit is the previous era of *laissez-faire*, for total war was the only way out of the impasse into which that policy had led us.

Unless men were able to overcome their habits of acquisitiveness, Mr Murry goes on to say, preparation for war was the only way of solving the problem of unemployment. War preparation staved off the threatening anarchy, but made war inevitable. War is the final phase, the negative and inhuman way of enforcing that social consolidation to which men could not take the positive and human way. Social consolidation pacifists must accept. They are told they must discover their true function within a centrally controlled and planned society, within which whatever liberty they enjoy they will enjoy only by permission.

From all of this, it will be clear that Mr Murry's advice to fellow pacifists is unconditional surrender to the totalitarian conception of society. He indicates no possible alternative.

We emphatically demur. The course recommended is starkly reactionary and as such must be dismissed. We are urged to seek salvation and freedom through restoration of privilege, power, coercion and authority, a throwback to the past, as evidenced by all the teachings of history which shout aloud to us that progress and freedom follow emancipation from and not restoration of these very things. Progress has come through liberation and not through submission

to authority. Through liberation we have gained all we treasure and pride ourselves upon. History records that the road whereby mankind has advanced in knowledge, in the mastery of nature, in unity and personal security, has lain through a progressive emancipation from the bondage of authority, monopoly and special privilege. As Walter Lippman has so conclusively shown, one and all of the great movements of history were movements to disestablish authority. It was the energy released by this progressive emancipation which invented, wrought, and made available to mankind all that counts as good in modern civilisation. No government planned, no political authority directed the material progress of the last four centuries, or the increasing humanity that has accompanied it. On the contrary it was accomplished, and accomplished only, by a stupendous liberation of the minds and spirit and conduct of men. If Mr Murry's counsel to his fellow pacifists is to be followed by craven surrender to authoritarianism, all this is to be reversed!

It surely is astonishing that Mr Murry does not realise that rather than fasten on our backs yet more firmly the yoke of authority, the better way out of our distresses is to pursue the very opposite policy by pushing into new fields the policy which in the past has yielded to humanity so rich a harvest even though its application has been very restricted. Why should we not seek the good life through extension of liberty into fields hitherto closed? Mr Murry's mistake is his failure to realise that there exist any further fields into which liberty can and must be extended if we are to reap to the full the benefits she holds in store, and that therein lies the way out of our troubles. His counsel of surrender to authority implies that there are no such new fields to conquer. He seems to think possibilities in that direction are exhausted.

Mr Murry apparently takes no account of the obstructive tariffs which strangle trade, of land laws which rob the producer of what is rightfully his and of a system of taxation which frustrates his efforts to gain a livelihood. And thus he fails to see that in the search for the better life our choice lies not between adherence to the *status quo* and surrender to totalitarianism, but between that surrender and the sweeping away of every man-made law which denies to all men their equal right to use the earth and to trade freely in the products of their labour. It is into such fields as these that liberty must be extended if ever we are to enjoy the blessings of a true democracy. Wherever such liberty is denied—and everywhere it is denied—it is folly to talk as if democracy exists and so it is folly to talk as if democracy had failed for what

has never existed can never have failed. Equal opportunity to work for a living is the first condition of a true democracy. To-day this condition is everywhere unfulfilled and unfulfilled it will remain so long as the masses are landless. Our earnest hope is that pacifists will not be influenced by the counsel Mr Murry offers them, but will look steadily forward and work for the gaining of a better life through the building of a free society where all men's rights are equal and special privilege will be a thing of the past. Here indeed are new fields to conquer. Let us extend the work of liberation where others have left it uncompleted.

W. R. L.

"THE WARNING FROM FRANCE"

IN A LEADING article, under the above title, on 2nd August, the *Manchester Guardian* bade us all take warning from the downfall of our one-time ally. We are to beware of disunity. Especially as we are opposed as a nation to an enemy who has learned the way—one way at least—to impose unity upon Europe. Faction in the old Greek sense, says the *M.G.*, has been spreading with the economic disorder that followed the Great War in every country in Europe. We are told how Hitler has used this spirit of faction to secure unity by force or guile, and in that unity he remains the strongest power in Europe. "The question," the article says, "put to those nations that have to hold their own against that strength is whether they can preserve unity with liberty."

But unity and liberty are not enough. The article quotes Hobhouse's words: "Liberty without equality is a name of noble sound and squalid result." Something is said also about Liberalism, and the confession is made that: "We are now at a stage when if the belief in liberty which is its (Liberalism's) root is to survive as a bond of union there must be a drastic change in the social structure." But what change? Our great Liberal organ gives no guidance. Not one evil is specified, nor reform mentioned. Neither the first step nor any indication of the changed direction we are to pursue. There is no attack on any vested interest in the maintenance of the present social structure. There is the veiled implication that the existing social structure is not one that leads to unity or liberty or equality. But nothing explicit.

We are directed by a series of references in the article to our modern guides. George Peel in the *Contemporary Review* is quoted; Sir N. Angell in his Penguin book *Why Freedom Matters*; Prof. H. J. Laski in *The Decline of Liberalism*; Mr Priestley's broadcasts; Prof. Ritchie in *Philosophy*; all are cited and in the same breath as the names of Bentham, Mill, Green and Hobhouse. If quotations were wanted much in this article could have been found in Henry George, who, however, was not averse to carrying his thoughts to logical conclusions. George alone gives what none of these writers does: a reply to Prof. Ritchie's acid-test questions about the manhood who fill the nation's armies and have never had employment since they left school. There is not an avenue to any employment that has not at the entrance a privileged person, entitled to the collection of rent for the mere permission to toil, who will stand ready to exact his toll. This privileged section of the community is just one, the most powerful one, of the "factions" which have disrupted other nations, and will disrupt ours if we do not take warning. Germany itself, as well as France, is a warning. In the charter of the Weimar Constitution of 1919, it was declared in Section 5, Article 155, that "an increase of the value of land arising without the application of labour and capital to property shall inure to the benefit of the community as a whole." Even this mild approach to a Georgan solution was never put into effect. Faction prevailed over the general interest. So it has in this country in 1931 and since.

If equality is to be achieved, without which there can be no liberty, nor unity, we must put every citizen on an equality

with regard to the patrimony of mankind, the land. This can be secured by the taxation of land values, which will stop the private appropriation of rent. This would indeed bring about a "drastic change in the social structure." Why do our Liberal journals and writers shrink from specifying this or any other equally effective social change? Liberty calls for courage and candour in its advocacy and testimony. If there is faction in our midst it is for our Liberals to indicate and expose it.

D. J. J. O.

ALSO IN AMERICA—THE LAND RACKET

It is interesting to see in *The Freeman*, New York, August, parallel instances of experiences in this country, as expenditures on war preparations mount up. It is significant. The comment made in *The Freeman* is pertinent and appropriate.

"To reduce the sacrifice we must bear, to make our preparations more effective, we should abolish by law all possibility of private gain. . . . Let us determine upon a captain who seems able to bring us out of the valley of fear to the mountain top of national security. . . . Such a captain would not pay \$3,500,000 for 520,000 acres for an anti-aircraft centre in Savannah, Ga., as did our Government last month. Nor would he tax us to obtain 13,738 acres of land at Fort Sill, Okla., 6,126 acres at Camp Custer, Mich., 3,000 acres at Great Camp Basin, Utah, and 41 acres at Fortress Monroe, Va.

"Why should the owners of these lands, who as American citizens are to benefit by the preservation of our ideals just as much as the rest of us, who stand to lose as much if the enemy is not kept away, why should they receive a gratuity from the common sacrificial defence fund? (Maybe they are entitled to something for the "foresight" they showed in holding on to the land until it was needed for preparedness; maybe the land would not be there if they had not held on to it!). The common sense of the situation, to say nothing of simple honesty, requires that our ordinary marketplace technique be abolished until we feel we are adequately prepared, or have won the war for which we are preparing.

"If we enrich landowners by purchasing their holdings—or by paying them rent for the natural resources needed for preparedness—the suspicion will not down that preparedness is a conspiracy to defraud the many for the benefits of the few, using national fear as a cover."

ADEN'S WEALTHIEST MAN

Ladislas Farago, in his book *The Riddle of Arabia* (Robert Hale, London), mentions Bentob, Aden's wealthiest man, who is "worth about five million pounds in safe securities and properties." The author goes on to say: "Bentob inherited his wealth from his grandfather, Manasseh, who was famous as a money-maker all over Arabia. When the English landed at Holkat Bay in 1839 Manasseh, whose family had lived in Aden for centuries, was a very poor man. They employed him as customs officer and he began doing business on a large scale. Soon he had made enough money to buy up all the desert land east of the Crater. What, at that time, seemed utterly mad, turned out to be a clever real estate speculation. The British began building on Manasseh's property, and by the end of the century a whole town had sprung up on the strip of land which he had bought. Old Manasseh never sold—he only leased his land. When he died, at a very old age, a few years ago, his grandson inherited a fortune of several million pounds which is still increasing by the steady flow of rent and more rent. The old man was a prisoner of his money: he lived in constant fear of being robbed and killed, and built himself a fortress-like house and had a huge bodyguard keeping constant watch over him."