

# How To End War Forever

(The 88th. weekly radio lecture by Editor L. D. Beckwith (The Forum and No Taxes), speaking as The Voice of Freedom, KWG, Stockton, Calif.)

In *The Saturday Evening Post* of July 10, 1937, there appeared an article by Will Durant, entitled "Why Men Fight", in which he discusses the causes but not the cure for war. There is no indication in the article that the author believes there is a cure for war. In this matter, he seems to be without hope; for he speaks of a "calendar of wars whose beginning is as distant as its end".

In listing the causes of war, he includes what he terms the psychological and biological and political causes of war. In doing so, he is mixing the sciences in an inexcusable manner; for, while psychological, biological and political causes may lead to personal quarrels, or even to family feuds, they have not the slightest bearing upon the social upheavals we call war. Psychology has to do with the mind, and that means that it has to do with matters that concern only individuals, not society; for society has no mind; it is under a different law.

The most serious error in the Durant article is his attempted explanation of our lack of buying power. On this he says: (Qt)

Since men are by nature unequal—some strong and some weak, some able, some (as they tell us,) virtuous—it follows that in any society a majority of the abilities will be possessed by a minority of men and it follows from this that sooner or later a majority of goods will be possessed by a minority of men; but this natural concentration of wealth impedes the wide spread of purchasing power among the people; production perpetually accelerated by invention leaps ahead of consumption, surpluses rise and generate either depression or war. (Unquote)

## AS FANTASTIC AS THE ANCIENT THEORY OF COMETS

It is true that men are of unequal earning power and that lack of buying power causes depressions, unemployment and unrest and that in seeking markets or in other efforts to overcome these difficulties nations become involved in war; but it is not true that the inequalities in men affect, ever did, or ever could affect the buying power of a people. This theory that depressions and war are the result of Nature's failure to make us all alike and to endow us with equal intelligence, shrewdness and persistence is as illogical and fantastic as the theory of the ancients that comets are the condensed smoke of human sin set on fire by sparks from the sun.

It is no more necessary for our economic health that all men be equally productive, or that they have equal spending power than it is necessary for the health of a man's body that all parts of the body be equal in size, weight, or activity, or that they need the same amount of nourishment to keep them well.

Nature is a master of variety; no two of her creatures are exactly alike; nor does she make all the organs of our bodies the same size, or endow them with the same strength. Yet the

body functions smoothly. So with the body politic. It is not necessary that we be equally endowed, or equally wealthy.

If no man gets any of the product for nothing, the buying power of the country is not the least affected by the fact that our product gravitates into the hands of a few; for if no man gets any thing for nothing, every man gets all of his own product—whether that product be much or little. In that case every man has in his possession the the equivalent of his entire product; and all producers taken together have in their possession the full value of their product and can buy it all and pay cash.

A concentration of wealth resulting from inequalities of earning power would not cause a lack of buying power for the reason that in such a case no one would lose any buying power. But if some men live by the sweat of other men's faces, those whose product is taken from them lose buying power. It might be thought that this loss is off-set by the buying power of those who get these unearned incomes. The answer to that is contained in the story of the farmer and the hitch hiker.

This is a story of a farmer who, as he drove along a country road, overtook a hiker and invited him to ride in his wagon. The farmer noticed that the hiker kept his heavy pack on his back; and he suggested to the man that he put his pack in the bottom of the wagon bed and rest his back. But according to the story, the hiker insisted on keeping his pack on his back. He explained that he wished to show his appreciation and that he could do so by carrying his pack and sparing the horses.

But his action did not lighten the load on the horses.

For the same reason those horses were not helped by the fact that this hiker carried his pack on his back while in the wagon—for that same reason, the country is not in the the least helped by the buying power of those who live on the sweat of other men's faces. Their buying power is off-set by the fact that the real producers have been robbed by them of an equal volume of buying power. What happens is that the producers bear all the expense of production, and the non-producers share the product without any deduction for the cost of production—what they get is all net and wealth concentrates in their hands.

### LACK OF BUYING POWER EXPLAINED

If the rent that is privately appropriated by the collectors of rent amounts to 10% of the total product, the total buying power of the producers is reduced 10% and the market cannot absorb the product; then, as Durant says, "surpluses rise and generate either depression of war". If, then, rent is still further increased by reforms in government, or by our increasing culture so that the country becomes more attractive as a place of residence; and by progress in the sciences by which we are enabled to produce more goods at less cost so that the country becomes more attractive as a place of business, and 20% of our product is demanded of us as rent or the price of our jobs, our buying power falls to 80%, the unsold surpluses are larger and there is more unemployment, and more temptation to meddle in foreign affairs to find markets to absorb our surplus.

The charge, repeated by Durant, that because production is accelerated by invention the evils he is discussing develop more quickly is a favorite charge of the Socialists, the Communists, and the other Marxists; but blaming machinery for our lack of

buying power, for depressions, unemployment, and for war is as illogical as the child's theory that it is the swaying of the tree tops that make the wind blow. They overlook the fact that rents are rising, that men pay more for jobs, and that not only is our buying power reduced, but exploiters fight more fiercely for the chance of collecting the rent rake-off. Machinery does speed up the march of progress which in turn raises rent. But what happens next depends on whether we let the rent go into the pockets of speculators to enrich them at our expense; and machinery is not to blame for our choice in that matter.

Those who blame machinery for depressions and for war are overlooking the fact that rents are rising—meaning that the price of jobs is rising; and that the more men have to pay for their jobs, the more are they robbed of their product, the less buying power they have, and the more fiercely exploiters fight over the sites where the high rents are collected.

Though we are land animals and can work only on land, and can live only on and from land, we nevertheless permit some men to charge the rest of us for places to work and to live—that is, we consent to buy our jobs of them and let them keep the purchase money as their own, although it comes out of our earnings and reduces our buying power by that much, and that amount of buying power is lost to the world.

#### PATRIOTS OF HERE vs. ENEMIES OF THERE

This has two evil effects. First, as the price of a man's job must come out of his product, the buying power of the country is reduced by the amount of grand total of the prices paid for jobs. Second, the result of our stupid policy of permitting men to buy and sell jobs leads to speculation in jobs and causes the landowners to consider those patriotic who help to increase rents at the points where these landowners collect the rent, and in the same way causes them to consider those unpatriotic who labor to raise rents elsewhere, or who help, even unconsciously, to raise rents where others do the collecting. In this way the world is divided into the Patriots of Here, and the Enemies of There; and all mankind is embroiled in a continuous war over rent. Everywhere men are tempted to control as much land as they can so that they may monopolize as much as possible the price of jobs and run up the price of jobs; and nations are tempted to go to war to control the flow of trade that their own nationals may collect the rent that accumulates at the centers where these trade routes converge.

This battle over rent rages everywhere, and the fighting takes all forms from Chamber of Commerce pronunciatoes, to armed conflict, including all the myriad forms between these. Some times the fighting takes the form of a contest over city zoning, sometimes it takes the form of a tariff war; some times it takes the form of contests over licenses, inspections, or over wages and hours. Very often it takes the form of a drive to coax or coerce people into buying at home. But whatever form it takes the purpose is always to stimulate business at the point where these people collect rent.

All wars are fought over rent. The wars between Rome and Carthage were to decide the question whether the commerce of the Mediteranean should center in Rome where Romans collected the rent, or over in Carthage where Carthaginians collected

the rent. The landed class of Rome popularized the warcry, "Carthago delenda est", meaning, Carthage must be destroyed. And in that day every patriot was expected to believe Carthago delenda est. Rome won, Carthage was destroyed; Rome became the trade center and Romans collected the rent.

Our Civil War between the states, in 1861 to 1865, was another such war. That time the contest was between English subdivision developers and New England subdivision developers, and the question at issue was whether the cotton of the Southern states should be worked up in New England by workers who pay rent to landlords in our New England states, or in Old England by workers who pay rent to landlords in England.

The World War was over rent; it was a war between the British and German rent crowds.

We had entered the Industrial, or Machine age. England and Germany were the two great industrial countries, the two powerful rivals for the position as the processor of the world's goods. Each country was bidding for trade, because in each country there were industrial cities and about these cities were fields that were held by land speculators who hoped to sell them off in industrial sub-divisions.

To sell these sub-divisions there must be "smoke" in the home chimneys. This smoke symbolized the industrial activity upon which depended the employment, upon which depended the chances of these land speculators to sell off these sub-divisions.

The sale of these lots depended upon the presence of buyers and the presence of these buyers depended upon the possibility that these factories could employ more men, or more factories would be built who would need more men; and that depended in each country upon the success of that country in winning business away from its rival.

Just now the world is witnessing an undeclared war forced on China by Japan because the landowners of Japan wish to divert more of the trade of China to Japan where they collect the rent.

Thus sectionalism, whether or not it results in armed conflict, is always a matter of rent. Examine closely the circumstances leading up to a war, any war, and it will be found that the conflict is over rent. And the way to stop all war, and to make an end of war and rumors of war is to do in this case what Mother did with us wars at home when we had our childish "wars" over our toys. Mother stopped those "wars" by taking the toy away from all of us and putting it up on a high shelf out of reach. In the same way we can stop, not only all armed conflicts, but all sectional rivalries by taking the rent away from all of us and putting it in the public treasury for the

There will then be no lack of buying power, no depressions, no temptation to meddle in foreign affairs to develop markets. We will have our wages and interest in our private pockets and our rent in the public treasury; that means we will have in our possession and at our command the full value of our entire product so that it can all be sold—and sold for cash.

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