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GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

The Seeds of War

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Part 18

We are told, and quite rightly so, that the future of the world is in the hands of less than a dozen men. It has even been said that the future of the world is in the hands of three men, one in the East of Europe, one in the West of Europe and one in America. And the future that we are all looking toward is a future of peace where men may work and live as brothers. And these men who have such power that the future generations may bless or curse them are struggling to try to solve the differences between nations and peoples, to try to arrive at what their peoples want, and the thing that the people want and must have is an economic reform.

They want freedom from the exactions of costly states that keep them poor. They want security in the land they till, and the homes they build, and they want a just distribution of wealth. Anything less than this will be an injustice and no civilization has ever lasted whose foundations are on injustice.

If we little people of America would make the world safe for the future we must have our representatives at the peace table dedicated to establishing a just economic system in Europe, for if we fail this it does not matter whether they go under the name of democracy, limited monarchy, Communism or totalitarian state, peace will be but a prelude to more wars.

So should it be with the heritage of all men. Whereas the railroad system is built by a few, the Almighty created the earth for all men. Thus we can see that equal rights to the land is very different from an equal division of the land. And thus to formulate the economic truth essential to preclude war we must put into effect first, that all men have equal rights to the use and enjoyment of the elements provided by nature, and secondly, that each man has an exclusive right to the use and enjoyment of what he has himself produced. If we put into effect these two principles we will save the democratic, capitalistic way of life, we will abolish poverty, and will set the example for other nations to follow in the way of dissolving the causes of war. All that it is necessary to do is to consider the land as joint property of the whole people, just the way the railroad system is the joint property of the stockholders, or any other industry belongs to its owners or stockholders.

If this is done we may leave land now being used in the secure possession of those using it, and leave land now not being used to be taken by those who will use it, on the condition that those who wish to use the land will pay to the community a fair rent for the exclusive privilege they possess, irrespective of improvements that may be there on located. If this be done then all men are placed upon an equality with regard to the use and enjoyment of those natural elements which belong inescapably as a common heritage to all, and that values which attaches to land, not because of what the individual may do, but because of the growth of the community would thus accrue to the community and could be used for the common benefit.

Thus if we little people would influence those dozen who hold the future of civilization in their hands, we must be prepared to show them by justice, reason, and practicality a method which if followed will guide man from the

barbarism we now enjoy to that condition of which the master spoke "Do unto others as ye would be done by."

And if we would make for a just peace and economic system abroad we can do no more to implement such procedure than by setting the example here at home. Absolute justice is a universally recognized and respected quality whether in the individual or the community. If we would have Europe at peace, if we would make its countries into living democracies then let us be a living symbol of that in which we profess to believe. "Come with me," said Richard Cobden, as John Bright turned away from a new-made woman's grave. "There are in England women and children dying with hunger—with hunger made by the laws. Come with me, and we will not rest until we repeal those laws." It was in this spirit that the free-trade movement grew in England, it is in this spirit that we who would stop filling graves with our youth must work together for justice and peace.

For those who would really make this the last war there is much to be done, here at home, in our small cities, villages and towns.

Those who would banish war and poverty must turn to land reform as the FIRST STEP, for until land is free there can be neither free trade nor free men. But the inevitable question arises: How may this be done? And then, before giving one time to answer hurry on to say that any land reform or distribution of land values will only make a man's title to his land valueless and destroy the incentive idea on which America has been built. Actually neither of these views are correct. Every man should have an opportunity in land values, but he need not expel me from my lot in order to do so, any more than a man who has interests in a railroad system does not actually own, nor could he go and attach as his individual property a diesel locomotive, or a dining car. His interest is merged into the whole. He is one of many, yet he has definite rights and may expect under favorable times a fair return on his investments.