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# Has the World Grown Smaller?

By ISABEL PATERSON

THE world, we are told, has grown smaller. Airplanes, radio, television, and other marvels of modern science have practically annihilated time and space for the human race. It takes only three days for a plane to circle the globe, and less than three minutes for television to show what is happening on the other side of this solid earth. Therefore, the popular argument says, we must bring our ideas up to date accordingly. We must get rid of obsolete theories and institutions, such as the individual liberty of Americans and the national sovereignty of the United States. These statements are put forward as obvious and indisputable.

Recently, I met a distinguished scientist, an American citizen with a European background and international honors. He had been abroad for several years and had just returned. "The world has grown smaller," he said. "We must think in terms of the facts of today. One can cross the Atlantic in twenty-four hours."

"Can you?" I asked.

The scientist stopped in his tracks, obstructing traffic slightly, though the sidewalk had not grown either larger or smaller. "Why," he exclaimed, looking a bit dazed, "when I came to America first, over forty years ago, it took me only twelve days, from Paris to New York, on a slow boat. I was young and poor and couldn't afford a fast liner. But this time it took me two and a half months to get back."

Columbus crossed the Atlantic in less time than that.

Those are the facts. Let us think in those terms, and see what they really signify. In point of fact, I cannot get to China now, though Marco Polo got there in the thirteenth century. I cannot go around the world at all, though Magellan's crew did so early in the sixteenth century. As lately as 1885 an American, George Kennan, visited Siberia to interview the political prisoners there, exiled by the Czar up to the number of two and three hundred every year; the convict colonies numbered thousands of persons, more or less closely guarded though there were frequent escapes. Kennan wrote a book on what he had seen there, in ample detail, which aroused deep indignation in the free countries. But nobody from outside could now get anywhere

near the Soviet prison camps in Siberia, from which nobody escapes, and in which millions of captives are dying of slave labor, hunger, and exposure. And apparently nobody cares. There and elsewhere in our "small world" innumerable people are either being driven like cattle, at a foot pace, where they do not want to go; or herded like cattle behind barbed wire fences where they do not wish to stay, turned back by bayonets when they try to break out, perishing in misery, unable to get anywhere at all. But one cannot see this by television. No television would be permitted to transmit the appalling sight. Information on the subject leaks out uncertainly, in dribbles, generally taking longer to reach the public than the news from China carried by Marco Polo.

It is indeed true that forty years ago, or as lately as 1913, anyone from a civilized nation could go practically anywhere at will, comfortably, speedily, and as safely as he could stroll down Main Street. That is no longer the case. The truth is that those who talk in such terms as if they were now true are "living in the past." They refer to conditions which have ceased to exist.

Whatever has been happening during the last forty years surely should be recognized, studied, and thoroughly understood if we are to think in terms of the facts, and draw rational conclusions from the past and present as a guide to the future.

There are primary facts with which rational thought must begin, as the human race began, in order to trace the processes by which we ever got anywhere. They are the natural conditions of existence. There are only four general ways by which human beings can exist on this earth—four types of economy, or means of obtaining subsistence. Naturally the economies could and did progress from crude to skilled stages of development; also they can exist contemporaneously, becoming somewhat mixed and reacting on one another. But they are not difficult to distinguish in essentials.

(1) The savage society, or "snatch economy," of wandering hunters who live by the bounty of nature, on what they can kill or pick up.

(2) The pastoral nomad society, wandering herdsmen who live in the main off their tame animals.

(3) The agricultural society, in which men have learned to get most of their living from cultivated crops.

(4) The industrial economy, ranging all the way from handicrafts to high-speed, high-energy motor machine production; and requiring a general exchange system.

Americans hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men are created with an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—the choice of what we will do. Liberty consists in the natural right of the individual to exercise his natural faculties in the natural world. In the various economies described, which are the only possible forms, the extent to which a man can use and benefit by his liberty is easily seen.

The savage can move about at his own risk as far and fast as his muscle power will carry him on such food as he can find.

The pastoral nomad can go wherever there is pasture for his beasts, moving as fast as they can walk and graze. But his economy, though it keeps him mobile, cannot develop into the industrial phase.

The primitive farmer must remain on the land he cultivates. He has begun *fixed base production*, which in its earlier stages tends to immobilize him. But the fixed base is the prerequisite of the use of mechanical tools for *production*. With property in land, metal work and the application of harnessed energy begin.

The industrial economy, operating from the fixed base and still including farming and animal husbandry, combines all the advantages of the three more primitive economies, and raises from them a new power. It is the only economy capable of extending man's range of movement and accelerating his velocity. It increases the variety of materials for use, and choice of activities, until man is free of the whole surface of the globe, and even of the air. Only the industrial economy can generate surplus energy, store it up, direct and control it, so as to afford human beings the full exercise of their natural liberty. With industry, man is *mobilized* far beyond his original condition.

All motion is expenditure of energy, which must be constantly restored if the given activity is to be continued. Thus an economy is an energy circuit, maintained by the persons it supports. This is equally true of the most primitive and the most advanced societies. It is a factual description, not a metaphor. A savage family constitutes the smallest human energy circuit, picking up maintenance from the bounty of nature, and rearing children as replacement. In our modern industrial economy, the materials used in the energy circuit, and the related actions, are infinitely more complex and extensive, but it has the same primary, basic requirement. *At least as much energy must be brought into the circuit constantly as is expended from it.* Failing this continuous maintenance and replacement, it will break down,

and the human beings in it must die, for it is their physical means of subsistence.

For unknown ages it would seem that man remained in the savage society, which will support only a scanty population at bare subsistence level. The pastoral nomad society, though presumably less ancient, is also of unknown antiquity, and likewise has a specific limit of population and cultural comfort. Then during at least six thousand years of pre-machine civilization, a small margin of surplus production was achieved which went into exchange and required the invention of money. With these advances, man was again mobilized; they made travel possible without carrying provisions. The range of movement was greatly extended.

But the maximum velocity still seemed to be fixed by purely natural limits. It was restricted to the speed, endurance, and availability of muscle power—human or animal. In the Roman Empire, after the great main roads were built through Europe and the Near East, the imperial post sped between Rome and the ends of the Empire as fast as relays of riders or slave-driven galleys could cover the distance. But these express methods comprised only a negligible percentage of conveyance. The average rate of speed of transports and communications—freight and travellers—by land was the rate of an ox-cart. Commercial shipping certainly was no faster. In the Acts of the Apostles, we may read how it took all winter for St. Paul to reach Rome from Jerusalem, in the custody of Roman soldiers, sailing on a mixed freight and passenger ship. It is a high estimate to assume that the average rate of speed of the energy circuit of the period was three miles an hour.

Cro-Magnon Man might have got about as rapidly, and perhaps as far if he had wished. But he could not carry the freight. The freight and the improved way of life were surplus energy, out of handicraft production. So much had been gained.

Napoleon's couriers could make no better time than the messengers of Augustus Caesar. Nor did goods move faster by land in 1800 than they did two thousand years earlier. But they did move faster by water, and in greater quantity. That was a further gain. Yet Napoleon could not supply the army of four hundred thousand soldiers he marched to Moscow; that was why three-fourths of them did not return. In the transport of the period, supply for such an army over such a distance was impossible. And velocity in an army had rather diminished than increased; it is doubtful if Napoleon's regiments could move as fast as Genghis Khan, or even a Roman legion.

But in the Great War not yet ended, the United States supplied four or five million men all around the world, by rapid transport, organized with instantaneous communication.

In hundreds of thousands of years, the range had fluctuated while the maximum velocity remained fixed. In six thousand years the range was extended by a new means, surplus production from fixed bases; but the margin of surplus also seemed to be fixed within the limits of handicraft production, so velocity was limited to muscle-power motion.

Then in one hundred and fifty years, or since about 1800, production accelerated by a geometric ratio, until the average rate of speed of transport and communication rose to about thirty miles an hour with a correspondent increase in tonnage (at a rough and probably low estimate) for the United States. The standard of living rose equally, and so did the population. It is probable that there are about as many Indians now living on the North American continent as when Columbus arrived, but there are also a hundred and sixty million of the newcomers! The increase in surplus energy is fantastic; it rose from zero to something like four h. p. per capita. During the same period the population of Europe tripled and the recurrent famines of that area practically ceased.

The thing that happened was a large scale *conversion of mass into energy*. The splitting of the atom is only the ultimate expression of that process.

Two thousand years ago the Greeks were on the verge of inventing motor power, but they stopped short. Why did that weary time elapse before science got under way again? Why did the margin of surplus energy remain so low for ten thousand years, and then rise to the power of the dynamo in less than two hundred years? There must have been some peculiar problem to be solved, outside of the mechanics of actual production.

There was. The problem which had to be solved before production could get under way was the problem of government.

Savages have no formal government, no separate organization for that purpose. They do not need it, having only portable property; and they cannot support it, having no surplus energy.

Pastoral nomads have only personal government by a tribal chief, who can be deposed without violence if he is incompetent. He has no means of ruling by force, for the reason that there is not enough surplus energy to support an executive organization separately, and

also, *pressure cannot be accumulated against a mobile object*—that is, a member of the tribe.

Formal government with executive force comes into existence with fixed base production. It arises from the necessity of maintaining title to immovable property, land and buildings and the like, in the absence of the owner, so that the individual may enjoy the mobility which surplus production affords. Such government is also capable of executing criminal law in order to cut the sequence of reprisals, or blood feuds. When government performs these proper functions, law is not a restriction of liberty. It is, in fact, a means of extending the exercise of natural liberty; it offsets time and distance in the system of exchange. It obviates the natural limitation of primitive fixed base production, the immobilization of the producer within a small area.

But since pressure can be accumulated against fixed objects, or men engaged in fixed base production, it is necessary for the producer to have an adequate method of keeping government to its proper function. Otherwise government immediately becomes tyranny. So it was and so it remained for thousands of years. Throughout the whole of “civilized” history up to about 1800, government claimed authority to bind men to the soil, to prescribe and limit their work, to prevent exchange of goods, and to put them to forced labor—in brief, to stop productive enterprise. Thus it nullified the great intrinsic advantage of fixed base production.

A slave no longer has even his own natural energy at his own disposal. In the ancient despotisms, where every man’s property and person were subject to seizure by the king, nobody could accumulate capital and put it into production with certainty of getting the benefit himself. Under feudalism, the serf and tenant had no mobility; nor could they get the good of improvements on the land, which is possible with individual ownership, by freehold. The individual had no standing. He must get permission to work, license to trade; men were stopped on the roads, goods taxed at every city gate and provincial border. Liberty was not recognized as a natural right; no one dared to assert it. The language of permission speaks only of “liberties” or “freedoms” in the plural, which is to say, grants from authority to do some particular thing, to reside in one small area, or to move a few miles. Government was such a chain and a burden that it made men long for the original freedom of the savage.

In such conditions, only small local energy circuits can be organized, with a trickle of trade from a tiny surplus. It was impossible

to form a high-energy circuit operating over an extended area. As recently as 1707, or before the union of England and Scotland, England alone was "the most populous area within Europe in which trade was not obstructed by artificial barriers." In England also the individual was least restricted by government in his choice of occupation, least taxed, safest from arbitrary arrest or confiscation, and no longer bound to the soil. That comparatively greater freedom made the British Empire.

Yet even England imposed restrictions on colonial industry and trade. The United States was obliged to break away. It expanded over the continent with unexampled velocity. The free citizens were actually free at last, not only nominally but with the necessary institutions for the fullest exercise of freedom: freehold land, contract law, and limited government. Liberty creates its own physical means of expression. The existence and influence of the United States tended to diminish restrictions everywhere. With Great Britain and the United States as the two major powers, the great world energy circuit was formed, having such volume and speed that the transcendent power was at last expressed in the airplane and in radio communication. For a brief period, the whole world was practically open; only Russia and Turkey hindered travellers by requiring passports, and they found it difficult to refuse them. Freedom is power. Any nation in which the citizens are actually free can liberate the whole world, not by conquest, but by the flow of energy overcoming the inertia of government control elsewhere. The less free countries have not the power to resist even by force of arms, for the high-energy circuit can pay for the world-wide protection of its own nationals and trade out of its vast surplus.

But a "world government" under which no one is free would still have no energy circuit; internal restrictions would prevent it. And the unfortunate inhabitants of the globe would have no recourse against such universal oppression.

Trade is the power line of the long circuit of energy. At any period, a map showing the trade routes with figures of the speed and volume of traffic would give the index of surplus energy and optimum population.

Now take such figures of today. The rational deduction is terrifying. Such a depleted energy circuit cannot possibly support the previously existent population. It is not supporting them. They are perishing, dying down to the lower optimum.



For even the volume of goods transported now is by no means the actual volume of trade. Military supplies are not trade. No materials expropriated by government, whether in taxes or in kind, are in the energy circuit; they are not exchanged, they are merely consumed or destroyed. Even if they are given away in "relief," and consumed by civilians, nothing comes back from them for maintenance and further production. They are a depletion of the energy circuit. Also the travel of government officials, unlike travel for trade, is merely a depletion returning nothing. And such government shipments and travel constitute a large part of the use of transport today.

Regrettably, the exponents of "free trade" do not stipulate a really free trade. It is not free trade when a private business in one country deals with government controlled or government bonused or government owned goods from another country. Free trade would have to be trade between free economies. Government intervention within a nation cuts the energy circuit; so that there is no equivalence in such exchanges. When goods are exported at a cost in human lives, from a slave economy—as Russia exported wheat forcibly taken from the starving farm population during the 1930's—it is not free trade to receive such commodities. It is slave trade.

There are two means by which the long circuit of energy may be destroyed, though both are actions of government. One is by government restrictions on the producer, expropriation or forced labor. The other is depletion by taxes. Up to a certain point, such expense will be shown in a shortage of goods, in diminished production. Below that point, when there is no longer any surplus, the expense appears in the death rate.

What then has happened during the past forty years? An enormous increase in government, in both positive restrictions on the individual and on property use, and increased taxes; and a converse decline in speed and volume of transport and of communication for the individual, which signifies that the energy circuit has broken down to such an extent that it cannot support the existing population. And the increase of government has not brought peace; rather it has made peace impossible. The surplus population must now be exterminated—by government. By war, famine, pestilence and mass "liquidation."

Those are the facts.

It is easily possible to calculate approximately how long an economy takes to run down and stop after government control has been imposed on it. As with a rising energy level, so with a decline; the

coefficient is the average rate of speed of transport and communication, taken at the time the controls are imposed. It can take some time to run down by consuming capital assets. Russian production sank below subsistence level with the Bolshevik revolution; it has existed ever since on borrowed means and with a deficit in lives—prisoners worked to death. The British debacle dates from various piecemeal impositions of the political power which do not give one exact date; the actions include the Lloyd George budget of 1909 with its confiscatory death duties and subsequent currency depreciation and seizure of investment securities. The significant imposition in the United States began in 1929 with the extension of government into finance and “relief.” The Roman Empire took three hundred years to collapse from depletion, after the political power had become absolute in the emperor so that citizens could not resist increasing taxation and forced labor.

If the average rate of speed in the Roman economy was three miles an hour, and the modern rate is thirty miles an hour, the equation is as follows:

3 miles per hour—300 years

30 miles per hour— 30 years

The argument for such increase of government has always been that the increased complexity of an industrial economy requires more government. The plain, unalterable, physical fact is that high energy, high velocity, and great volume of production require proportionately less government. The long circuit must be unimpeded. It was formed during the period in which government diminished; it has collapsed as government has increased. The world is perishing from too much government.