

## Canterbury and the Profit Motive

*A member of the faculty of the Henry George School of Social Science in New York, LOUIS B. POTTER, takes issue with the Archbishop of Canterbury on the question of the profit motive.*

★ NOT ALL THAT glitters is gold. Neither is every land reformer a leader for truth and liberty. Gleaned from the news is the announcement that the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking at a recent mass meeting in London on postwar social reforms, condemned society's emphasis on the profit motive and urged a central planning authority through which land would be developed by the state in the interests of the people. In this the church seems to have caught on to the tail of Marxism, and with socialist and communal theories as a starting point, all subsequent efforts toward reform, however honest, are merely expressions of half-truths which turn into added chains of bondage.

For if man is to be permitted some measure of freedom in exchanging the products of his toil, it is difficult to conceive how that exchange is to take place constructively without the spur of the profit motive. In fact, to destroy the profit motive in the production of goods is to foment idealistic and impractical notions of communal ownership and, in the name of the noble ideal of equality of sacrifice, actually encourage unequal and unjust distribution of the products of labor. It is unjust, for it encourages the idea of producing and sharing regardless of whether the return is commensurate with the effort produced.

To do away with the profit motive is to destroy the incentive that has led man to produce, namely the satisfaction of his desires with the least exertion. Would the church destroy this instinct and make man over? It is this instinct that has accounted for the progress of civilization. It is indeed this selfish instinct of man, the moderate or reckless use of which makes for the advance or retrogression of society.

There is but one instance in which the profit motive should not exist and that is in natural resources and in land, i.e., the free gifts of nature; for they represent no toil of man.

But to make this principle operative by means of the state developing the land in the interests of the people and thus controlling the channels of distribution, is tantamount to control and determination of the behavior of man by a few politicians, and must eventually lead to dictatorship and slavery.

This principle can be made to function without the paternalistic controls of government by merely substituting one form of taxation, at present grossly neglected, for the numerous unjust and debasing taxes on the products of labor. Instead of the current frenzied efforts for postwar controls through new and increased taxes, let us rather institute now the wholly fair method of taxing fully the revenues derived from the values of natural resources and of land, as distinct and separate from the improvements thereon.

At once the opportunity for individuals profit from land and the bounty of nature would be automatically nullified, while the demand for productive development would in no wise be reduced. No need then to curb or to control the profit motive. No need then for government to interfere in the distributive activities of men exercising freely their selfish and acquisitive instincts to satisfy their desires with the least effort. Through this sane and fair method of taxation it would become impossible, except by simple thievery or beggary, to profit from the free gifts of nature, and therefore impossible for any exploiter to secure any claim on the wealth which other men produce.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has evidently become infected with the virus of socialism. He seems to have fallen victim to the Pied Piper tunes of fascism, technocracy and other paternalistic forms of totalitarian slavery under which all freedom, even the freedom of religion, will eventually be lost.