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By Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman

STOP-GAP CHARITY By Bolton Hall.

IT is estimated that fifteen million dollars is expended annually upon the charity work of New York. This is outside of the State and city appropriations. A careful calculation shows that there are about ten thousand persons who support our organized charities. That is to say, there are ten thousand persons who may be called "the charitable," and who give an average of one thousand five hundred dollars apiece annually.

When we consider that there are some New Yorkers who could afford to give the whole sum, and when we look at the long rows of brown-stone houses owned by men, hardly any of whom are real producers in any true sense of the word, think of the heavy expense of a "brown-stone family" in New York, which cannot be less than ten thousand dollars a year and often reaches one hundred thousand dollars, I think you will agree that we are not a charitable community.

But the rich are not the real givers of real charity. Some cynical clergyman has said that no man ever became poor by giving. He meant no rich man. The poor do not put their names upon subscription lists, but they do help each other, and they do give to an extent which puts those who are most occupied with philanthropic work to shame. And this last charity, the giving to those whom we know and for whom we care, is, I believe, the only charity that does not do more visible harm than possible good.

Let us look at a few of the samples of our systematic charities, beginning with the Fresh Air Fund, to which most of us, I fear, contribute; if you will look at the condition of the poor children of this city, I do not think you can possibly conclude that their comfort, their health, or their happiness has appreciably increased within the last ten years, since this charity became important. But even if it had a real effect in improving the health of the children, it would but increase the population, the value of land, and competition, and lower wages, and raise rents. Nor is there any logical limit to it. Why should we stop at giving the children freshair excursions? Why not the little mothers? Why not the shop girls? Why not the hard-working mechanics? And why should we limit it to two weeks? It is one of those things which are never finished, and never can be finished, and of which the most liberal community could never say it has done enough.

Neither would emigration help, although it would temporarily lessen the population, for it would be only to create new centers, where population would quickly grow again.

Model tenements, such as the Tenement House Law approves, are a favorite device for "improving the condition of the poor." But if the more desirable habitations attract more people to the cities, they are distinctly an evil, and they unquestionably tend to raise the value of the land surrounding them and, correspondingly, the rents.

The fact is that whatever aid of an eleemosynary kind can be counted upon, it will reduce the rate of wages. Because where two men must bid for one job, he will get it who, other things being equal, can work the cheapest, and he will work the cheapest who is less provident and who avails himself most fully of charitable aid. The Poor Law experience of England proves this beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Whatever charity is occasional can but pauperize the recipient. "Then," says some one, "we may establish hospitals, so that at least the sick may be taken care of."

To me it seems that it would be better to abolish the conditions which make them sick. Anyone who has ever tried to get a patient into a hospital knows the necessary red tape that must be gone through, a requirement which is due to the fact that the hospitals cannot possibly accommodate even a percentage of those who are sick and in need. They are in every section of the city, they are all overcrowded. And still we are asked for additional contributions.

We have organizations for finding employment for discharged convicts. Under present conditions, they can only give one man employment by taking away the work of another, and it seems hard that the one so deprived should be an honest man, in favor of a criminal. That is just like our free classes, where we teach women to do men's work and thereby reduce men's wages. For when there is competition, women, who almost always have some one who will help in their support, can afford to work at a lower rate than men. Even now, in the Sweating inquiry, we have complaints of philanthropic institutions, by the aid of which the charitable do piece work at rates upon which a sewing woman cannot live.

It is not possible in the space of this article to give even the leading objections to such work. If any are sufficiently interested to send their names to me, I would be glad to send them a more exhaustive paper upon the subject.

We have a lot of Fairs, Bazaars, Charity Balls, to call which "Charity" is an insult to common sense. They are attempts to cozen the miserly or the spendthrift out of money which they will not give for the sake of giving.

Prof. Richard T. Ely says that he sees the disadvantages of charities and has grave doubts of their benefits, but he asks what are we to do with those who are actually in need of food? The most efficient and cheapest of all relief is to allow them to cultivate the vacant lots near the cities. This is being done in about thirty cities. The experience heretofore has been that the money advanced to these people for seed, brings forth, the least of it, ten, some twenty and some an hundred fold. For those who cannot afford to await the crop it is easy to do, as the New York Committee is doing, pay them five or seven cents an hour and let them have an interest of half the crop when sold.

But as all our people cannot be so accommodated, and as the relief we give them secures them but a little better living, we must look for a more radical remedy. We must put them in the way to acquire *wealth*. We must put them in such surroundings as to induce them to acquire *wealth*. What is *wealth*? Any desirable product of land and labor and capital is but accumulated wealth. So that capital also comes directly from the land and labor. On the way here you passed over

acres and miles of good land vacant, unfenced, untilled, but owned. Lands upon which countless thousands of the poor and miserable and unhappy in America could find sustenance, health and happiness. Why do they not do it? Because the moment they begin to work the land, the owner comes, if indeed he permits them to work at all, and demands a part of the produce as rent, because those fields and lots, which ought to be covered with small factories, market gardens and farms, in which men ought to dig and mine and quarry and sow, are shut out from him and rendered unavailable for the employment of labor by the land speculator.

We must get this land back into use. It is far easier to get the land back to the people than the people back to the land, and there is a simple, practicable and just method of accomplishing it.

Let all the taxes for cities, State and national purposes be raised upon the rental value of land, exclusive of improvements. Let us cease to raise taxes on whatever improves our lot or our house or our farm, and let us raise them upon those who have valuable mines or coal shafts, or water powers or valuable business sites, or other natural advantages, whether they be used or half used or not used at all. That is the simple program. The Single Taxers at least know what they want and they know how to get it. We mean, by continual agitation and by legislative action, to abolish taxes on capital, on property, and on persons, one by one as opportunity offers. We mean to have the taxes increased upon land values in accordance with the present law of the State, until they are assessed at their full value.

We hear much about the union of reform forces. Here is a reform which, though it is not very pure Anarchy, can be accomplished without interfering with any other reform.*

* We wish the Single Taxers all success: but to accomplish their reforms by legislative action seems to us a Danaidean task.—Ed.

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Don't ask fr rights. Take thim. An' don't let anyone give thim to ye. A right that is handed to ye fr nawthin' has somethin' the matter with it. It's more than likely it's on'y a wrong turned inside out.
—Mr. Dooly.