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THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY

"I ask not veneration of the form but recognition of the spirit." So spoke Henry George as he described in a famous address the institution of the Jubilee by which the Mosaic law provided for a distribution of the land every fifty years and made monopoly impossible. "Moses saw that the real cause of the enslavement of the masses of Egypt was, what has everywhere produced enslavement, the possession by a class of the land upon which and from which the whole people must live. He saw that to permit in land the same unqualified private ownership that by natural right attaches to the things produced by labour would be inevitably to separate the people into the very rich and the very poor, inevitably to enslave labour—to make the few the masters of the many, no matter what the political forms; to bring vice and degradation, no matter what the religion."

It is from the Hebrew that we get the word "Jubilee." Its use has been corrupted to mean just a span of years which being passed in good company gives occasion for festivity and rejoicing. So has been celebrated the 25th anniversary of the King's coronation. The national holiday has come and gone. It has been a break in our lives in which conditions remain as before. The shop-keeper takes down his shutters and is concerned to meet his next bill for rent or rates. The workman gets quickly to the factory gate that he may not lose his job to one of the reserve army of unemployed. The labour bureau and the public assistance committee resume business dispensing the dole and the relief that passes the poverty test. Wealth and fashion prepare for a renewed round of pleasure, and from some port a luxury liner starts on a world cruise carrying passengers at £500 a head.

In the Hebrew code the Jubilee was more than a fact. It was a deed. It dated the emancipation of the people from economic oppression. It gave them the security that the modern world is trying falsely to attain by trade barriers, Customs duties, currency manipulation and all the panoply of fiscal weapons and military equipment. For what is this security of which there is so much talk and which the plenipotentiaries are chasing across Europe to capture, saying it can be made possible only by arms conventions, pacts of mutual assistance, bilateral and multilateral, collective responsibility, and what-not? It is the jargon of the diplomatists. Security against what, against whom and for what? The peace that is to be preserved by the possession of superior forces, by such a show of guns and tanks and aeroplanes as will persuade others that their armaments are inferior and therefore useless, is a peace that is not worth preserving. The discipline of the sword keeps each nation at bay, the nations that should be bound together in fraternity, with the prosperity and the moral progress of the people as their highest aspiration. But what

security they now speak of is purchased with the waste of countless treasure and is fraught with the gripping fear that any day the hell hounds may be let loose. While such a peace lasts the people will remain in bondage to their own worst passions, an easy prey for the exploiter within their own doors, the causes of their discontents shouldered by their masters on the foreigner, their belief or hope in social betterment a one-time vision now scorned as heresy.

In this country we may demonstrate our pride in the fact that our institutions, King, Lords and Commons, have lasted through these 25 years of upheaval, that so much of political freedom at any rate has been retained in a world rapidly reverting to despotism. Save for Holland, Switzerland and the three Scandinavian countries, over the whole of Europe Government is by decree, Parliaments have been dissolved or put in commission, tumult and terror have enthroned absolute dictatorships. The voice of Liberty has died away. The hideous spectre of war, dancing devilishly in the Press and the meeting place, leers over the flags and festoons of our own patriotic celebrations. In Germany conscription has been restored. In France and Italy service is prolonged and battalions are called to arms. In Great Britain recruiting offices are opened for the many thousands wanted to be trained in flying and the art of bomb throwing. The ground is heavy with the tramp of soldiers.

It is a League of such nations that is expected to look after the welfare of the common man, to check his warlike instincts and take from him the weapons by which he would kill his fellow-being or destroy his property, the fellow-being across the frontier with whom he has no quarrel that is not fabricated by self-seeking interests. Wars are not fought by the Cabinet Ministers or the diplomats of either side who make the pompous speeches and scurry off to conferences with one another. If that were so the differences and the conflicts would be quickly composed. A few irresponsible persons make the atmosphere that sets nations at each other's throats. The working man at his plough, his machine or his desk, or building for the sweetness of his home, is called upon to murder his mates in another land who were similarly engaged when from an inner room the order was given for the slaughter to proceed.

Security and collective responsibility, what do these words mean? If the statesmen were thinking more of the security of the labourer against poverty and unemployment and less of the perils of dynamite they would be destroying the incentive to make that dreadful stuff. Every tariff is such incentive, every barrier, quota or restriction against friendly commerce. If the statesmen were conscious of their own share of responsibility in fanning the flames, the guilt could be fastened and something done to put the flames out. In our own case it is very pertinent to leave the abstraction of the collective responsibility and judge the acts of the Ministers and Members of Parliament under our own control. What has been their contribution to world pacification? They imposed the tariffs in 1931 and have since increased them. With their Ottawa agreements they carved out trade for special interests and placed embargoes on the goods of other nations. It was an act of War and in the language of War defended as a reprisal but leading to further reprisals and the erection of a new thicket of barbed wire fences beside the trenches that even now are being dug. But the tariff raised to spite the foreigner, and also certainly spiting him, had for its real intent and successful purpose the shifting of taxation upon our own consumers and tribute exacted from them by the protected classes.

Security? What other security has mankind excepting that which nature itself provides for a full and happy existence? It is not in the gift of Governments and Parliaments, a matter for pacts and conventions and the rattling of sabres. The conflict is born of scarcity that Governments have brought about by permitting the monopolisation of natural resources and taxation strangling trade and industry. The security wanted is that which will lift the people out of their distresses and the fears and anxieties about getting a living. Peace and prosperity may not be until economic freedom is. With never a thought of greed or envy, we might be showering on one another the blessings of the earth and sharing all the benefits of mental and moral progress. In recognition of that spirit, let there be collective co-operation toward just laws that will ensure to each his equal opportunity to enjoy the security that nature has so freely placed at man's disposal, the space to stand upon, the raw materials from which everything is produced, the forces that are pent up in rain and wind and sunshine. This and this alone is the road to the abolition of war. A. W. M.

Mr Robert Grindlay, reporting as Inspector of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children at a meeting in Falkirk, gave instances of overcrowding in that town. For the past six years, he said, a family comprising 10 persons, including eight young children, had been living in a single apartment house. In another instance a mixed family by marriage, consisting of the parents and 10 children, were all living in an ordinary two apartment house. The sleeping accommodation was absolutely inadequate, and a bed had to be rigged up in the lobby of the house. In the county area a family consisting of the parents and six children had been existing in an ordinary wooden toolshed for the past three years.—*Glasgow Herald*, 2nd May.

PENNY PAMPHLETS

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RIBBONS FOR SALE

The long-promised Restriction of Ribbon Development Bill has now been issued. The main proposals are that in respect of all "classified roads" it shall not be lawful without the consent of the highway authority (a) to construct, form or lay out any means of access to or from the road and (b) to erect or make any building within 220 feet from the middle of the road. The highway authority may apply these provisions to any other road, or alternatively it may fix for non-classified roads one of the standard widths (60, 80, 100, 120, 140 or 160 feet) and thereupon the restriction against forming any means of access will apply and also a restriction against erecting any building nearer to the middle of the road than one-half of the standard width adopted.

Any person having an estate or interest in the land affected may claim compensation from the highway authority for injury caused by the restrictions. He must satisfy the arbitrator that proposals for the development of the land which at the date of claim are immediately practicable (or would have been practicable but for the restrictions) are prevented or injuriously affected, and that there is a demand for such development.

The highway authority is given power to purchase compulsorily any land within 220 yards from the middle of any road. If it exercises this power before compensation is awarded the price must be determined as if the restrictions did not exist. In any case the arbitrator may set off against the compensation awarded any benefit to contiguous lands of the owner arising from the purpose for which the land is acquired.

The town planning authority may give consent to the development of land affected by the restrictions.

The whole cost of claims for compensation in respect of classified roads will fall upon the local rates. In the case of other roads in regard to which the power to apply the provisions of the Bill lies with the highway authority, the Ministry of Transport may, but is not obliged to, make advances towards the cost. It may be assumed that highway authorities will be disinclined to use these powers unless they have first obtained an undertaking to contribute from the Minister and until they have had some experience of the magnitude of the claims that they may be faced with.

The only people who are likely to be satisfied with this Bill are the owners of land adjoining arterial roads. They are likely to be in the happy position of claiming considerable sums for compensation unless the local authority evades the liability by giving wholesale permission to develop and waives the restrictions, as apparently it may do. The provision with regard to betterment is likely to be in practice a dead letter, as all such provisions have been in the past. In any case it only applies if the land bettered belongs to the same owner who claims compensation.

The one conclusion that stands out clearly is that the Government is resolutely determined to ignore the fact that it is the existence of the road that has created the land value, or that the community has any claim upon the land values it has created. F. C. R. D.

In the year 1557 Archbishop Whitgift bought 70 acres of land in Green Lane, Norbury, for the sum of £375. It was the "Christian Fields Estate" which formed the ancient endowment of the Whitgift Foundation. The *Daily Telegraph*, 16th May, reported the sale of 19 of these acres at £39,100, being more than £2,000 per acre. The land is close to Streatham High Road.