

Land, Means of Production, and Commodities.

(Points raised at a Study Circle conducted by Dr. Rudolf Steiner, March 3rd, 1920.)

IF we consider the actual material things that play a part in economic life, we find they are, broadly speaking, of three kinds. First, there are the raw products of Nature, the natural resources which are there without any application of human labour. The most important of these is land; therefore it is convenient to group the class of natural resources under the heading "land." Secondly, there are things on which a certain amount of human labour has been expended, but which are not themselves directly used for ordinary human consumption. Most kinds of machinery are typical of this class. We may call them "Means of Production." Thirdly, there are those "Commodities" which are, actually and directly, articles for human use.

Machinery and Rights of Property.

Such a division is by no means rigid, and the object of making it is not to establish theoretic systems once and for all with the idea of saving thought in the future, but rather to assist thought and to stimulate it. Different economists may use the above words in different senses. Thus, for example, it is possible to treat all commodities as means of production or all means of production as commodities. A machine has to be made; labour and skill are expended on it. It is therefore sold at a price; it appears on the market once as a commodity. Thereafter it becomes a means of production; it comes under an essentially different category from a suit of clothes. The capitalist economic system treats all means of production as commodities, and persists in doing so. The employer who buys the plant has the right to sell it again, just as he has the right to sell a suit of clothes secondhand. But these rights are not really of the same kind; they are not equally just. For it is a man's own concern whether he sells a commodity which he alone uses. But he is not the sole user of the plant; indeed it would be valueless to him unless he had a body of workmen to work it. Hence, in a just and reasonable social order rights of property can not attach to means of production in the same way as to genuine articles of consumption, or commodities as above defined. Means of production, once they are in use, can only be disposed of by common decision of all those

who work at them as producers, or of the community as a whole. For their disposal may seriously affect the lives of those producers, and it may also dislocate the lives of the consumers who depend on the articles they produce.*

For these reasons it has been said that, broadly speaking, means of production can appear on the market as commodities once and once only, namely, when they are newly made. A price is paid for them, representing the labour expended on their manufacture, and the rarity of the materials they contain. Thereafter, they remain connected with groups of people in the economic state—for example, with the associations of the producers who use them. And they can only be disposed of through channels such as are suggested in Ch. iii. of "The Threefold State."

There appears to be an exception in the case of those means of production (generally known as "tools") which one man can use alone—hammers, for instance, axes and so forth. A man has a perfect right to sell his axe, although, significantly enough, this does not very often happen. A good workman will get used to his tools; they gain a personal value. It is this kind of intimate and human relation of a workman to his tools, or of a producer to his means of production, which the machine age has largely tended to undermine. And what might have been left of it has been almost wholly removed by the economic rights, or rather the economic wrongs, which have been recognised as rights by Capitalism.

Man and the Use of Land.

Private Capitalism treats not only means of production but also land and natural resources as commodities. The results of doing so may often be even more disastrous. Natural resources in

* In Germany during the past year bricks were so scarce that they had to be rationed. Nevertheless, owing to the peculiar economic conditions, it actually happened that the owners of brick factories could make more profits by selling their factories to contractors to be dismantled, than by carrying on or selling to productive firms. The workers concerned protested, and a storm of criticism was raised. In this case the exercise of the old private capitalist's "right" to sell means of production as mere commodities is palpably unjust. But note that it would also have been unjust for the body of the brick-workers as a whole to do so, even had they desired it. For the whole community was concerned.

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their natural state—i.e., before they have been transformed or shifted by human labour—are always attached to a certain bit of land. Human beings are also attached to land, often far more intimately than they are to their tools or means of production. A fundamental question of human life and human rights is touched upon whenever it is suggested that a certain piece of land, inhabited by human beings, should be put to fresh uses (e.g., altered cultivation, afforestation or deforestation, mining, railway sites, etc., etc.). For the new uses will either make it impossible for those people to inhabit it any longer, or else radically alter their methods and conditions of life. In either case, old ties and old traditions are uprooted. Sometimes it may be necessary and right to do so. But the point is that the question must always be treated as one of right, and not as a mere economic transfer. (Cf *The Threefold State*, p. 70.) The rights or interests of the community must be judged as against the rights of the particular individuals affected. Nor is it merely a matter of rights; it also concerns true economy. Very often it may happen that a temporary profit can be secured to certain individuals or sections by altering the economic uses of a locality. But the inhabitants are thereby thrown out of their fundamental conditions of life. Their economy, maybe, is upset far too fundamentally for them to adjust themselves to the new conditions. And the net result is to strike them out of the lists of truly profitable producers. The community loses on the whole, and does not gain. On such matters it will need local men to judge, for they alone can know the fine threads of inner life that connect a particular population to particular pursuits, particular uses of the land—say forestry, or sheep-farming, or agriculture.

The Threefold Aspect.

Thus, on the question of land, it is especially evident how the three distinct aspects must enter in and play a part, and how a society which is threefold will have the means and the conditions for settling such a question in a just and human and economic way. The economic point of view: the needs of the community for certain commodities. The spiritual, or individual, or inward human aspect: the fine ties of association and talent, of love and of tradition, that link men to certain pieces of land and uses of the land. Finally, the common human aspect, the aspect of equity and human rights, to balance between opposing

claims maybe, and to assure that in every case standards of right are observed.

Money—the Single Aspect.

In the modern world everything is treated under one aspect: the aspect of money and money-value. By this means, everything is turned into a commodity. Land and means of production are treated in the same way as genuine articles of consumption. And, in place of concrete human interests such as those above outlined, something essentially abstract is the ruling factor in economics and social life, namely, money and profit. Money is a most abstract thing. When we take the money-values of different things—say, in the present social order, of a bag of potatoes, a pound of cheese, a dog, a day's wages to a labourer, and a plot of land—we abstract from their differences and look only at one thing: what do they cost? Money is a kind of common denominator. It is essentially the same in the intricate workings of capitalism, on the "money market" where money itself becomes a commodity. The investor habitually looks, not at the concrete human forces that are put into play through his investment, but at the margin of profit, the probable risk (expressed in percentages), and the security. If there is a "good" (i.e., from his point of view, safe) security he does not trouble about its nature. His eye is always concentrated on the abstract figures of profit and possible loss. An 8% investment, well guaranteed, may enable candles, or wax matches, or munitions to be manufactured, or it may facilitate the import or export of tea or opium; it may stimulate the development of a healthy or of a pernicious and sweated industry. The investor does not know in many cases, and as a business man is not supposed to care. Even if he be well meaning, it is often impossible for him to know the more or less immediate effects of his investments, so intricate has the modern financial world become.

The Age of Abstractions.

This is an age of abstractions, and the greatest of all abstractions is money, which rules the world. Abstraction is good, as far as it goes. Without the faculty of abstraction man would never have developed thought, nor even language in its present form. But it is an evil day when man no longer employs abstractions; when

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abstractions begin to employ and govern man. That is what has happened to-day. The aim of the thoughts and purposes suggested in the Threefold State is to get back from abstractions to the concrete realities of human life. Otherwise, the realities are bound to take their full vengeance on us.

The Labour and Socialist movement is fighting against Capitalism and the rule of abstract Finance. But, in so doing, it is perpetually in danger of being drawn into the same abstractions—as, for instance, when the aims of strikes are expressed merely in terms of hours and wages of labour. More than this, it gets drawn into the same abstract ways of thinking that have allowed Capitalism to reach its present pass. This is the message of the Threefold Commonwealth to the Labour

and Socialist movement—to base its struggle and its reconstruction, not on some abstract theory about “economic man” and “economic forces of history,” but on a real effort to gain insight into the whole of human nature in a full and sensible and all-round way. When we make this effort we come to see that three aspects, and three separate kinds of organisation, are necessary if man is to cease to be a commodity and a slave to economic systems. And in this threefold order it will not be a question of making rigid, academic distinctions in theory; but in actual life a real and natural distinction will appear, in the way in which land, and means of production, and genuine commodities or articles of consumption are dealt with by the whole community.

G. K.

Education as an Art.

UNDER this heading we propose to publish a number of articles on the principles and practice of education, and its relation to the Threefold Commonwealth. Many of them will deal with the new “Waldorf School,” founded at Stuttgart about 18 months ago, and initiated under the personal direction of Dr. Rudolf Steiner. Many years ago Dr. Steiner published a booklet on “The Education of Children,” a booklet which has been very widely read, and to which we would refer all those who desire to gain a further insight into the methods of the Waldorf School. In the Waldorf School the thoughts suggested in

that booklet are for the first time being put into practice, not so much as a science, but as a personal, individual art of teaching and of education. In the short time since its foundation it has achieved remarkable success and earned a wide reputation.

We print below the translation of an article by Dr. Steiner himself, which appeared in a recent number of the Swiss periodical “Soziale Zukunft.” This series will include further articles by teachers at the Waldorf School, and also by English educationalists in relation to the special conditions obtaining in this country.

The Educational Aims of the Waldorf School in Stuttgart.

By Dr. RUDOLF STEINER.

People who prepare themselves for the teaching profession at modern training colleges go out into the teaching world with many excellent principles of pedagogy in their minds, and undoubtedly many of them have the goodwill to put these principles into practice. And yet there is widespread dissatisfaction in this sphere of life. New, or apparently new, systems are continually being put forward, and schools are founded which are supposed to be better adapted to the needs of human nature and of social life than those which have hitherto resulted in the course of modern civilisation. It would be unjust not to recognise how many noble men and

women, inspired by the highest ideals, have during the last century or so been devoting themselves to the science of education and teaching. In the historic results of their efforts the teacher of to-day may find a rich store of pedagogic wisdom and inspiration.

Indeed there is hardly a want which makes itself felt in the sphere of education and instruction, for whose remedy guiding ideas could not be found in the works of one or other of the great educationalists. Thus the prevailing dissatisfaction cannot be due to the lack of a well-developed science of education, nor can it be due to lack of