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THE FAITH OF A REVOLUTIONARY

More Phosphorus And Less Fear

(From a BBC talk by H. G. WELLS)

A FEW weeks ago, the BBC arranged for a series of talks by acknowledged authorities on the reshaping of man's heritage through science. Twelve talks on the place of biology in the scheme were compered by H. G. Wells. Here, slightly abridged, is his introductory address:

I AM an extreme revolutionary who considers the doctrines of the Communist Party, as you get them for example in the *Daily Worker*, 50 years behind the times. I don't ask you to prepare for a new world, because I realise that a New World is here now. The question is whether our species, we, our children and our children's children, can adapt ourselves and conquer the new world, or whether we are going to spin down this vortex to extinction: extinction which has been the fate of all the mighty races of animals that have lorded it over the world in the past.

What, briefly, is this New World, this new state of affairs that confronts mankind? It has a three-fold aspect. First, there is what is called the abolition of distance. Things have become simultaneous throughout the earth. Thirty years ago, to think of one super government throughout the world was an impossible dream. Now it is an imperative necessity. Next comes the enormous increase of available power, which at present is used mainly for destruction. All the mechanical-power, wind-power, horse-power, water-power, used in the England of Queen Elizabeth for a week, would not equal that released in a moment by one 8,000-lb. bomb. Thirdly, the unskilled work of slaves and such-like toilers can be and is being largely superseded by power-driven mechanism. The old social pyramid has vanished. Mankind has no further use for serfs and slaves. The New World ahead must therefore be an equalitarian society.

Not Opinions, But Facts!

These are not views I am stating, but manifest facts. For 10 or 12 thousand years, not more, since men took to agriculture and organised warfare, there has been no real human community. There has been a heap of masters and men, what Disraeli called the Two Nations. Now for these three reasons I have stated, there is no choice before mankind but a world-wide control of power and production—world-wide, no less—and a world-wide scrapping of our inheritance of hates and aggressions that began less than a thousand generations ago, when wars began. We have to nerve ourselves for that, and there is no other way for us.

Obviously this world control must be something over and above the patchwork of governments we inherit. They arose from militant necessities; they remain militant and competitive. But plainly it is the commonsense of the world situation that, over and above these old divisions, a group of commissions to rehabilitate our disordered world should be established as soon as possible by the victors in the present

struggle. To these commissions all the governments of the world must surrender their sovereign rights to practise economic and political aggression against one another. That has been done already within the U.S.A., within the U.S.S.R., and in Great Britain and some, but not all, of the Dominions which have replaced the old British Empire, where people of the most varied creeds, cultures, and languages live in free and open co-operation. It has to be done, and done still more completely, throughout the world.

Life is Phosphates

Professor Armstrong used to take my Socialistic optimism down a peg by pointing out that human productivity depends upon the supply of phosphates in the world, and that is a limited and dwindling quantity. Sir Frederick Keeble has been discussing this recently. So far as our present methods of conducting human affairs go, the process is as follows. Every year, a certain limited amount of phosphates is dissolved out of disintegrating rocks, brought to the surface and made available for plants. Flood and stream bear much of it directly to the sea, but some is intercepted, forest and pasture flourish, and animal life consuming this green stuff increases until it outruns the supply. Then the vitality of the land diminishes. Long before winter, pasture, gardens, trees go brown, feed for the cattle diminishes, milk decreases. The soluble phosphates have found their way into the sea.

We Must Dig Deep

Human life is an incident in the passage of phosphorus from the at present inaccessible rocks, lying below those in the geological series, to the abyss. In a fragmentary way, we supplement the supply by the use of such natural fertilisers as Chilean guano, now almost exhausted, phosphates which have been snatched back for us at the last moment by fish-eating sea fowl, or we resort to basic slag and kindred foundry products to enrich our fields. A good farmer heavens his ground in this way; his neighbour may or may not do the same. But directly we turn our minds to the possibilities of a collective world control of Nature, we realise that the meagre supplies of soluble phosphates from decaying rocks, volcanic upheaval and the like, upon which all life—all life—hitherto, has subsisted, may be enormously increased and replaced by an immeasurably vaster abundance. It is only a question of going deep. We can imagine a united, empowered, and altogether more intelligent New World driving shafts deep into the earth, pursuing the lurking phosphates into those depths from which they now emerge so meagrely and reluctantly; we can imagine a smiling succession of fertili-



H. G. WELLS

"Communists are behind the times"

ties, and so easy will food-getting become that with the greater part of our planet our kind will make a pleasant garden, a variety of habitations for their varied and expanding lives.

Let me turn now to the horrible and tragic waste of human lives that has been going on since, five hundred generations ago, war and subjugation broke upon mankind. This period of five hundred generations, a mere yesterday in the long history of this globe, was spent for the great majority of human beings in abjection and frustration. Winwood Reade, in his immortal book, has called these 12 or 15 thousand years *The Martyrdom of Man*, and maybe it was a necessary schooling for our species. I do not recognise the necessity, but anyhow, this ugly interlude in the life of our planet is mounting now to its catastrophic end, and a further question, far more fundamental even than the phosphate question, is what has to be done with the immense majority who are being emancipated by the New World, a majority from which even the laziest, most inveterately stupid ruling-class minds surely cannot expect a return to subjection, service, and uncritical acquiescence.

Re-Education of the World

Our human heritage, indeed, is a devastated estate of undeveloped or distorted possibilities. One can only guess what proportion of human beings in the past missed the slightest chance of self-development, how many mute inglorious Miltons died in silence, how many potential Newtons never learnt to read. The supreme task before our awakening minds is the re-education of the world. Given world unity and world sanity that would now be an easy task. We have in the radio, the film, in the facility for the rapid transport of material and specimens, all that is needed to cover the whole world with schools, and in the multitude of quickened minds this struggle has evoked a supply of men and women who have discovered that by teaching we learn. There are claptrap phrases about backward races and inferior peoples. These are the foolish excuses by which those who still hope to go on at an advantage over their fellow-creatures camouflage their own foolishly base dreams. There are no backward races.

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