

THE BEACON.

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The Beacon.

"Fiat Luz."

MAY 1ST, 1893.

A new-comer into the crowded ranks of journalism is usually called upon to give some reason for its presumption, and to explain upon what grounds it hopes for welcome and support.

The Beacon is a democratic paper; its aims are to enlighten the public mind on the evils which result from State interference with individual freedom; on the evils which arise from the neglect of the State to fulfil the functions which rightfully belong to it; and on the disasters which, of necessity, follow from an unjust and inequitable system of taxation. It will uphold the equal rights of all men, and will point out the poverty, crime, and corruption which inevitably arise from any interference with the equality of rights.

The Beacon owes its existence to the present condition of affairs, which, not only in Victoria, but nearly all over the civilised world, causes

poverty in the midst of plenty, forces starving men to listen to tales of "over-production," and locks up vast areas of unused land, while thousands have not where to lay their head.

When millions of acres lie idle, when Capital cannot find investments, and willing hands and brains can find no work to do, thoughtful men must ask themselves if there is not something radically wrong in the social conditions which divorce Labour and Capital from the land, and oblige men, who should be making wealth for themselves and the country, to beg in charity for work. These distressing facts are patent to all who do not wilfully shut their eyes, or thrust their heads into the sand like the ostrich, vainly imagining that because it cannot see the hunters they have ceased in their pursuit. The grim huntsmen—poverty, crime, and anarchism—are following fast, nevertheless, and will surely overwhelm the nation that seeks to flee or to hide from them, instead of bravely facing them and removing the conditions which breed them, and the food upon which they live.

The Beacon will strive to show what these conditions are, and how they may be dealt with so as to bring prosperity and happiness within the reach of every honest man.

Of those who recognise that life is a dreary round of hopeless toil to nine-tenths of the world's population, some blame God, or, more blasphemously still, thank Him for the curse of poverty; some blame human nature, some the devil, others over-population, or trades' unionism; and all of these are hopeless of effecting any change. There are a few, however, who recognise that the laws of man are responsible for the world's misery, and that what laws have done they can undo.

It is to these that *The Beacon* appeals. It hopes by its light, to augment their numbers, and to show to all who read that land monopoly, the appropriation of the heritage of the many by the few, is the primary cause, lending its terrible support to

many lesser ones, of the melancholy state of the poorer classes all over the world to-day.

It admits that old-established wrongs frequently cause secondary evils which may not disappear immediately upon the removal of those wrongs. But it has faith in the recuperative power of men, and it is convinced that this recuperative power will enable men ultimately to throw off all social evils when once the causes have been removed to which they were originally due.

These causes it holds to be monopolies and monopolies alone. Whatever privilege a Government confers on some men, which cannot be, or is not, equally conferred on all men, must create a monopoly. Against such monopolies, whether they be in land, in industry, in commerce, or in professions, *The Beacon* will wage war. All such monopolies it will seek to abolish, especially the most disastrous of them all, the monopoly in the land from which, and upon which, we all must live.

The Beacon believes in competition; not the present one-sided, disastrous competition which arises because the majority of men are deprived of their right to use the land, but in the fair and equal competition into which men voluntarily enter when the fear of starvation is removed from them. It will, therefore, advocate the State ownership, and, where unavoidable, the State or municipal conduct of all monopolistic enterprises, such as railways, the supply of gas, water, and electricity; the abolition of the monopoly which protective duties give to a few manufacturers; the abolition of all other taxes and rates, and the substitution for them of a tax on land values equal to the annual rental of the land in an unimproved state. The conduct of all industries which are not in their nature monopolies it would leave to individuals unhampered by restrictive legislation. While advocating these fundamental reforms, *The Beacon* will always be willing to consider any

palliatives for existing conditions which may be required through the disregard of social and economic justice by existing legislation. But recognising that anything short of the removal of existing monopolies must be ineffective as a cure for social wrongs, it will direct its main efforts to this end—to the end of establishing conditions which will enable every man to make all the wealth which he wants, to enable every man to retain all the wealth which he makes.

At the same time it will seek to provide comments and articles upon other interesting subjects of different descriptions, and its Correspondence columns will be freely open to any who care to ask for information upon, or to criticise, however adversely, the arguments and statements which appear in it.

The Beacon is the organ of no association of any kind, and owes no allegiance to any party, but will fairly and fearlessly criticise public men and public actions from its own standpoint, condemning all that makes for monopoly or interferes with individual liberty, and praising all that tends to keep men's hands from the property of the people, and to make them free to do as they like with their own.

Its promoters consider that no paper in Victoria has ever before consistently advocated democratic reforms, and accordingly they trust that *The Beacon* may find support from those for whom it speaks, and with a full sense of its shortcomings, but with a strong hope that its efforts will not be in vain, they submit the first number to the public.

FREE TRADE.

Our attitude on the fiscal question cannot be better defined than by a quotation from the famous Democratic manifesto, issued by the Chicago Convention—"We denounce Republican Protection as a fraud—a robbery of the great majority of the people for the benefit of the few."

We hold that any law which takes from the people more than is necessary for the purposes of government is unjust; that any action of government which interferes with the rights of each individual to do what he will with his own—with the fruits of his labour—is wrong; and that a law which prevents the free exchange of the products of each man's labour for what he will is robbery.

"Protection"—to manufacturers as it used to be truly named, to workingmen, as in these democratic days, monopolists all the world over are trying to call it—is an interference with liberty of the very worst kind; for, while not interfering with the free competition among workers, which reduces wages, it does prevent that free competition between capitalists, which lowers prices. The primary object of a protective duty for the encouragement of native industry is to enable the protected manufacturer to obtain a higher price from the worker, while the same manufacturer is always a bitter opponent of any measure which, by reducing the competition among workers, will enable them to obtain a higher price for their labour—the only commodity which they have to sell. Even if the results of such a system were for a time apparently good, we should equally denounce it; but like every unjust act, Protection is working its own ruin. A system which in England was upheld by the owners of the wheat lands, while the people were starving; which in America is supported by the rings of manufacturers, and the "robber barons" of the railroads who import alien labour to force wages down; which in Victoria is upheld by the men, who, after successive increases in the tariff, pay constantly decreasing wages, stands condemned in the sight of every man who, having eyes, is willing to see, having brains, is willing to think.

We shall, therefore, enquire into, and publish in detail, the direct effects of the policy of Protection in Victoria, dealing with the two aspects which concern more especially the masses of the people. These are the effects of the tariff on the price of goods, which the labourer must buy; and on the price of labour, which he must sell. We shall also enquire into the effect of Protection on the unemployed question, and see how the diverting of industry from its natural channels has brought into existence "infant industries" only to sicken and die, has thrown out of work thousands of men who should never have been in the towns, and at the same time has ruined our farmers.

In America, the home of "syndicates," manufacturers "combine" to control the supply of goods—euphemisms which, when examined, are found to mean that by a reduction in the supply of goods, the price is largely raised, and a greater profit made

on the smaller supply than on the previous whole. The syndicate—cotton, wool, iron, as the case may be—to reduce supply, closes some of the mills, pools the profits, and casts adrift a large proportion of its workmen.

It will be shown how Protection alone, by shutting out foreign goods, makes this nefarious practice possible, and also, how attempts have been made to follow exactly the same course by the protected manufacturers in Victoria.

But we are not blind to the fact that Protection is only one of the interferences which prevent that equal freedom, which is the right of every man. Freedom to trade, to exchange, is of little use unless freedom to produce the wherewithal to exchange is also secured.

Protection and land monopoly go hand in hand. The Free-trade of *The Beacon* is true Free-trade:—the right of every man to produce what he can with his labour, and the right, in addition, to exchange that produce for whatsoever he will.

THE PRESENT.

"After all, the chief cause of the modern prosperity of new countries lies in the markets that the old world offers, not for goods delivered on the spot, but for promises to deliver goods at a distant date. A handful of colonists, having assumed rights of perpetual property in vast tracts of rich land, are anxious to reap in their own generation its future fruits; and as they cannot do it directly, they do it indirectly by selling, in return for the ready goods of the old world, *promises to pay much larger quantities of the goods that their own soil will produce in a future generation.* In one form or another they mortgage their new property to the old world at a very high rate of interest. Englishmen and others who have accumulated the means of present enjoyment hasten to barter them for larger promises in the future than they can get at home."

This joyful picture of the present condition of colonial life is drawn by the able pen of Professor Alfred Marshall, in the first volume of his great work, "Principles of Economics" (Bk. VII., ch. xiii.). As far as it goes it is true; woe to us, it is only too true. We have put in italics the features which, to us, seem too hazily drawn, where the hand of the artist seems to have faltered.