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VOICE

INTEGRITY
FREEDOM
RESPONSIBILITY

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Belloc and the Servile State

The New Times (Melbourne, Australia, August 24, 1956) reprinted an essay that Hilaire Belloc wrote in May, 1908, with the comment that Belloc "saw clearly that Europe's main danger was from International Finance working hand in hand with Asiatic revolutionaries of the Left Wing."

Our readers would, we hope, like to see what Belloc said in 1908, and we accordingly condense his article, with a few notes.

The article is entitled "The Three Issues" and Belloc was a Member of Parliament at the time. He insists that "everyone, not only in the sense of the vast majority of the men concerned, but in the sense of the vast preponderance of the intellect and heart concerned, is determined that our modern industrial system shall be transformed. The poorest worker in the slums who suffers most from the industrial system is in communion here with the wealthy Parliament man or great Jewish usurer who benefits by it.

"Side by side with this industrial system stands another patent, perfectly modern and completely human fact: the plain fact that men desire to own. And it is the desire to own, and therefore to see ownership in others, which has informed all European law (from the origins to which any law can be historically traced) with the protection of ownership.

"The most immediate argument against this truth is afforded by those who point to the great crowds, the vast bulk of our cities, who have no experience of ownership, and can have but a confused conception of it. But are they at their ease? Are they living such lives as the nature of man requires? And do you think that if they were free to satisfy the human appetite in them, that freedom would not take the form of accumulating as soon as might be personal control over so much at least of the means of production as should free them from the servile discipline and fear under which they live?"

Readers of *Voice* will be familiar with various instances of the present war on ownership, largely conducted by financial means. But surely, to avoid servile discipline and fear, Everyman needs to assure himself of sufficient *means of consumption*.

Belloc then states the three issues with remarkable foresight: "We may transform the industrial system into a Collectivist State; we may transform it into a Servile State; or we may transform it into a State wherein the means of production are again distributed."

Our concern, of course, is not with the industrial system itself, which could be an extremely useful bag of tools, but with the use made of it, and the way in which the distributing or financial system interferes with the producing

system. Belloc then displays his insight into the use to be made of this system:

"The development whereby modern industrial society might become a Servile Society is obvious, though a little complicated. Already most men caught in the industrial tangle dread, above all things, the loss of their posts. The end of the road is a condition of society in which a comparatively small class of wealthy men shall control, under the guardianship of public laws, the lives of all the rest. I can imagine a future condition in which the dearest right the mass of living men possess should be the right of being ascript to their will.

"The next issue is Collectivism, and it is upon the plea that Collectivism is their goal that most thinking men support these detailed reforms of our time. To this idea of the Collectivist State there is nothing to oppose except the instinct of ownership and the results of that instinct. This desire to own, if you warp it or destroy it, or forbid its exercise, will carry with its disappearance certain consequences which must be faced. The sentiment of honour which survives in men, even at their last extremities, must be sacrificed. What we call "freedom" today (and the word is not meaningless) must be sacrificed also. Under a Collectivist State you must have a universal bureaucracy extending over very nearly all the activities of human life. This was the first criticism to be advanced against the ideal of Collectivism; it remains the most permanent.

"If you see in the Collectivist State the only solution of our modern problem, then you must pay the price for it. The price is the submission, or rather the extinction, of will and of personality in all their gradations, from the individual to the family and to the corporation."

We may note that Belloc's Servile and Collectivist States merge into one, so that the "three issues" really amount to two, and our choice remains between the horror that he so clearly foresaw and the possibilities of freedom which he sketched in his last few paragraphs.

"The third issue is the construction of a State in which so overwhelming a proportion should enjoy the minimum of personal economic independence as would give them back the life their fathers had. ...

"The future of our economic system seems to me to lie—if we are to maintain our present excellence of machinery and communications—between that solution and the Servile State."

So Belloc wrote in *The New Age* in 1908 and we emphasise the choice between Freedom and Servility today. Ten years after the essay—and years that included disaster and revolution and the extinguishing of the lights of Europe—a flaw in the distributing system was discovered, for prices always rose faster than the purchasing power to

VOICE

A JOURNAL OF STRATEGY FOR PERSONAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

"Liberty consists in the freedom to choose or refuse one thing at a time."

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meet them, causing a failure in effective demand. Solutions are available, just as Belloc's views were available, but our faces have been screwed round relentlessly to look to the Collectivist—Servile solution: Just as the prisoners in Plato's cave were forced to watch the shadows of puppets. Freedom means power, widely distributed, but those who desire to monopolise power naturally refuse to distribute it or to correct flaws in a price system—a correction which would give economic liberty. Clearly the issue is one of policy, just as it was in 1908 or 1844, and it is also one of Faith. For Christianity, which would exalt the individual to heaven, can never tolerate a tyranny that strips him of his divinely-given attribute of choice and depresses him in the mud, or hell, of servility.

Fettered Diplomat

Our readers may well be horrified if not surprised at the views expressed by Sir Victor Wellesley, K.C.M.G., C.B., former Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in his book *Diplomacy in Fetters* (Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1944).

He says: "Though the supreme direction of foreign policy must rest with the Foreign Secretary as advised by his staff in London, in this age of high specialisation the execution and much of the initiative will more and more have to be left in the hands of technical experts, and of industrial and financial magnates."

Where Belloc described three possible issues, Sir Victor (should it not be Sir Victus) leaves us with *only two, either the Servile State or the Collectivist State*. Either, he says, the destiny of nations will be shaped "by the unconscious forces and the relentless rhythm of the Machine Age, as exploited by irresponsible private enterprise. . . . The alternative is wholehearted international collaboration, political, economic and social; and this implies, if not national ownership, at least centralised control and planning on a scale unknown in Great Britain until it was forced upon us by the war. . . ."

The above is a measure of the recession of intelligence and morality and of the withering of will since Belloc wrote. For in truth "unconscious forces" never shaped anything, and in reality the alternative to one form of slavery or another is Free Choice and Responsibility.

The capitulation of Sir Victor is the more amazing as he quotes Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'ontre Tombe* as

follows: "Having posed the problem of leisure and unemployment, he ventured yet further into the future. He apprehended that socialist equality could assert itself only through despotism or dictatorship, that the remedy would be worse than the ill, and that the abolition of personal property would lead to a slavery to which history however far one delves into the past can show nothing comparable. Weary of private property, do you wish to make the government sole owner, distributing to a beggared community a share proportionate to each individual? Who is to judge of these deserts? Who will have the power and authority to exercise your decisions? Who is to hold this pack of human chattels and turn it to account? Make no mistake, without individual property, none are free. Property is none other than liberty."

Well Said

We hope that the following items may prove stimulating to our readers, and that the thread of common sense running through them may appear. A poet once called this uncommon sense, and we are inclined to agree with him at a time when few people think for themselves or exercise judgment on what they read or hear. Yet the ability to discriminate forms part of our divine nature and in itself divides us sharply from other creatures. We sometimes read complaints that an article in *Voice* is two distant from everyday events, but our ability to judge everyday events must rest on standards and be assured of the poise which can maintain a true balance in bewildering times; and we sometimes have to withdraw considerably from the hurly-burly to get our bearings.

'Punitive Taxation'

The Church Times (July 27, 1956) defended its attitude to the recent Socialist pamphlet, saying, "punitive taxation, simply and solely in order to ensure that one man is not allowed to have more than other is envy run mad. . . . The Church has never condemned private property, justly obtained and used. . . . But the main issue to which we draw attention is simply whether the powers of the State over property should be illimitable. The pamphlet which we criticise seems to assume that this is so. This is a dangerous error, which needs to be repeatedly exposed."

The Church Times rightly denounces the "dangerous error" that "the State" can have illimitable power over property, which error constitutes a total denial of personal freedom, and power always menaces freedom, not least the irresponsible power of finance.

'A Mockery'

The Tablet (August 25, 1956), in an article on "The Life of Cardinal Griffin," notes the late Cardinal's attitude to Poland, and his foresight on the issue. In December, 1944, he said, "The issue between Poland and Russia is a moral issue, a question of principle, and, whatever solution is arrived at, it ought to be in accordance with the principle of justice and charity which must underlie all international relations."

In March, 1945, "he made a strong appeal that the pledges sealed by Polish and British blood should be honoured; and on July 24th he declared that to sentence Poles to live under a Government chosen by Soviet Russia would be to make a mockery of their gallant struggle throughout the war years."

Unfortunately, Poland has been used as anything but a 'moral issue' between the nations from start to finish, and some of our own best advertised politicians have not been guiltless in the matter, let alone those Americans who have appeared willing to carve up Europe for the advancement of other interests, whether 'American' or 'Russian.'

'Reduction of British Interests'

The Rural Economy News Letter of May, 1956, remarks, "There is now general understanding of the fact that the reduction of British influence in the Middle East, whose oil supplies are very useful to the Americans, but very life to Europe, has been a main purpose of United States foreign policy."

We recall that the late President Roosevelt toured the courts of the Middle East on his way back from a wartime conference and that he had no very friendly intentions towards British interests at the time.

Another writer in the same number recalls a visit he made to Preiska in South Africa where a scientist had ploughed up land for an experimental station. The writer arrived in a violent dust storm, and concludes a vivid article by saying that his experience "coincided with the great truth contained in your article on Collectivisation, namely: 'In the long run every agricultural system must conform to the nature of the land and of those who till it. It has yet to be demonstrated that this truth is realised in Russia.' Personally I am certain it has not, nor among the many worshippers in Britain and elsewhere, who blindly swallow as true all the clever Russian propagandists like to tell them."

The edge of this article is blunted by the heading of the next contribution, reprinted from the *News Chronicle* and entitled, "*Tennessee Valley Shows the Way*." This surely was another 'collective' enterprise.

'The Importance of the Individual'

"On the one hand Christians ought to form one fellowship, one family, one communion. On the other hand their religion has fostered the emergence of the individual from the group, and has stressed in the most emphatic way the importance of the individual, simply as an individual. The world in which we live is tending on the one hand to reverse the latter process and to make the individual a cog in the machinery of the State, on the other hand, and at the same time, it is tending to liberate the individual from all ties and obligations, except those imposed by the State. In consequence, except for the obligations of citizenship, men are being left with no values or standards of conduct save the satisfaction of their own desires. . . ."

—*Graham Street Quarterly*, Summer, 1956.

I do not think 'the world in which we live' can do

more than any other abstraction to affect conduct: rather those directing the policy of the world are responsible for making such changes and here we would again make a personal appeal to our supporters, some of whom wrote when we last asked if we might hear. Our personal responsibility is great.

'Those Divine Laws'

Victorian religion is often considered to have disregarded all the horrors of the hungry forties and of the displaced small producers, but an article in *Theology* (February, 1956) on Thomas Arnold shows that such a callous view did not exclude all others. In Arnold's words, "under other circumstances the Christian minister may perhaps be allowed to confine himself to the care of the poor and the ignorant: but the clergy of a national church are directly called upon to Christianise the nation: not only to inculcate the private virtues of the Gospel but its pure and holy principles in their full extent; those divine laws of which it may indeed be said that their voice is the harmony of the world." In Arnold's view, "all church questions may be said to be both religious and political."

Unfortunately the divine laws that Arnold mentions were hidden under a mass of such legislation as the Bank Act (1844) and were laughed out of court by the very un-divine, or anti-divine, advance of Marxism. Such continues to be the price of neglect.

An Overseas Item

A correspondent tells us that Dr. L. C. Donnelly's *American Liberator*, Vol. II, No. 3, "contains two interesting items concerning local credit, one advocating local offices to monetize the real local wealth, and the other an improvement in local banking while waiting for such clean reform." His paper is published at 8203, Woodward Avenue, Detroit 2, Michigan, U.S.A.

'Rising to our Task'

The following extracts are from the magazine of the Church of St. Peter, Whinney Hill, and show that matters discussed in *Voice* are arousing interest where it is needed.

"When once the Christian religion comes to be treated as a hobby for harmless old ladies or the plaything of seekers after petty power and importance, it is a grim day for the Christian country. As surely as Christianity is eased out of any effective place in political, industrial and social realms by this means, there creeps in to take its place something at once horrifying in its implicit debasement of human dignity and horrifying in its practical effects on the lives of the people. . . . These poor creatures—once termed 'the crown of God's creation'—are thus herded into reliance upon 'those who know,' and the acceptance into their daily lives of a principle which is nothing less than practical atheism—the creed of world slavery.

"The same people rule behind the scenes in East and West alike and it is they who are engineering the farce of 'world situations' to drive us, through fear, into the arms of

a world dictatorship which offers 'peace.' We must gather together around our altars as never before, in order to re-learn and re-live the Church's true Mission in the world, for the greatest religious struggle of all history is upon us, and ours is *the only answer to Atheism, and the only alternative to complete enslavement.*"

We particularly note the author's emphasis that it is a "religious struggle."

Bishops' Speak

The Bishop of Sheffield, addressing the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Sheffield Cathedral gave the following warning (*Daily Telegraph*, September 3, 1956): "Belief in the autonomy of the sciences and their freedom from external controls has been the condition of their rapid and spectacular advance. The day of ecclesiastical controls is past but the danger of political controls is very present."

On the same day, September 2nd, the Archbishop of Canterbury preaching at Brighton to the Trades Union Congress, deplored that everything in industry was on too big a scale." But we can hardly agree with the Archbishop (as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*) that "the real danger of automation is that it limits still more the range in which a man can exercise his own initiative, craftsmanship and personality." That automation might be so abused is not unlikely, but properly used it should release men from monotonous tasks for a more human use of their time. If this is not the purpose of the industrial arts, they are not only an excrescence on the fair face of nature but are an additional burden on man's back—as if a man who used a lever always had to carry it about with him.

General Fuller

The Church Times, August 17, 1956, reviews Major-General J. F. C. Fuller's *The Decisive Battles of the Western World*, Volume III, in which the reviewer says "He has now set the crown on his achievement." We note the final paragraph of the review:

"General Fuller concludes his long story by observing that the use of the atomic bomb has shaken the whole accepted theory of war to its foundations. He believes that the age-old form of struggle between nations has been supplanted by the 'cold war' between the two giants of the world, America and the Communist bloc. Victory, he believes, will go to whichever of the two can first solve the problem set to mankind by the Industrial Revolution—the proper status of man in a mechanised world."

The proper status of man in a mechanized world remains our particular concern, and one on which the voice of Authority is needed; and we might well start by asking whether man exists for the mechanized world, or if this world exists for man. . . . The following extracts from two useful documents display a measure of the confusion now prevalent on this "sixty-four dollar" question:—

"A measure of responsibility"

"We return to the bigger sphere of the layman's life, the whole problem of an application of the faith to society. . . . Can we be taken seriously as Christians whilst factory owner-

ship, business management and the profits of industry, that is a measure of responsibility and privilege, are not offered in some degree to the mass of those who work in the factories? On such questions as these, economic, social, political questions a united Christian witness would be powerful. As it is we preach the Gospel but are divided. . . . It is futile to say that every man should own some property without showing how to make it possible."

From *Catholicism and the Ecumenical Movement*.
by J. M. Todd.

We have of course pointed out in this journal that the policy pursued (whose policy?) is to deprive as many as possible of property and of responsibility, while obscuring an improvement in industrial process which should benefit all. Inflation so-called damages all.

"The Dignity of the Individual"

"The fact is that the greatest concentration is achieved in relaxation. Watch any truly good sportsman, athlete or singer. . . . Above all the psychology of relaxation, as they call it, is an acknowledgement of the dignity of the individual. The boy who enters the examination room at tension does so because he believes he must overreach himself and present the examiners with an artificial *persona* of acquired knowledge. The boy who enters relaxed does so because he has made his knowledge part of himself and it is that self he is going to show the examiners, believing it to be more valuable, significant and wise than all the learning in the library."

From *The Foundations of Education* by Gerard Meath in *The Life of the Spirit*, August 1956.

The politicians doubtless understand something of the negative value of keeping us "at tension," because a concentrated and relaxed state of mind would militate against most of the absurdities and worse, notably the loss of our freedoms, which are so frequently *put across* us today.

Withering Power

"These men are free too from the power of the great capitalist, a power more withering than despotism itself to the enterprises of humble venturers." Kinglake's *Eothen*, 1844.

Personal Freedom

It would be difficult for a thoughtful man to read the words of Jesus without recognising that personal freedom, adult spiritual maturity, is what our Lord hopes for all who are attracted to him. . . . He wants us to co-operate, loyally because with complete freedom. . . . But there is another way to put it; if we believe what we are told because we are told it, we have no real regard for truth. Truth, as well as love, requires freedom. Or, as Jowett of Balliol put it, without independence of mind and opinion there can be no regard for truth.

A. E. Baker, writing on Toleration in *Theology*, August, 1956.