

MUSINGS and MEDITATIONS

By **DOG TOBY**

THE THREE-PARTY SYSTEM

IT has been evident for some time that the old lines of cleavage in matters political are rapidly shifting. A hundred years ago the most conservative of our modern politicians would have been deemed a dangerous revolutionary; the really old-fashioned bigoted Tory has practically ceased to exist. The Liberals and Conservatives of all countries are in favour of moderate reforms, consistent with the preservation of the existing social fabric and the right of individual ownership. They continue to range themselves in opposite camps from sheer force of habit, though they are quite unable to state any essential points on which they differ. But a new party has arisen, with a totally new policy, and differing most vitally from Liberals and Conservatives alike. Its members consider that the present state of society is radically wrong, and that any reform short of revolution is merely tinkering, and not mending. They argue somewhat as follows. - There are certain things given for the use of all—such as air, sea, land, and natural products, and mineral wealth. The State should own all land for the benefit of the community at large, and should be the sole possessor of mineral wealth. Our present system of individual ownership of land they characterise as illogical and detrimental to the best interests of the commonwealth. The people make the real value of city plots, public money and public works have gone towards making the town section worth more sovereigns to-day than it was worth pence a century ago. And the individual alone reaps the benefit of the work and enterprise of the whole community, and the public receives nothing except an occasional dole in return for its expenditure of capital and labour. They argue that if the people as a corporate body owned the wealth which they as a corporate body have created, our present policy of muddle could be replaced by an intelligent system of State Government. Any measures short of the nationalisation of wealth they regard as merely palliative and not curative.

In support of their policy, they urge that the greatest asset of a State is a large body of healthy, intelligent citizens. Does our present system bend to this end? They call attention to the following undeniable facts. The man deriving the greatest benefit from the State for the least cost is the bachelor. He need keep up no establishment, he pays less in rates, less in duty, and less in every form of taxation except income tax. He enjoys all the advantages of roads, lighting, police protection, and other benefits of settled government, and gives but little in return. He makes absolutely no return in the shape of bearing his share of the cost of rearing future citizens. Next to the bachelor comes the married man with no family; and absolutely the worst off is the man who has deserved well of the republic by training up a large number of children to serve their country in the future. They bring forward figures to prove that the middle and upper classes are shirking more and more the responsibilities of parentage, and that the bulk of our future population is born under conditions unfavourable to morals, health and intelligence. The State, they urge, actually penalises the family man, by making him pay higher taxes all round. And this state of things is to be remedied by the practical abolition of private ownership of property, and the placing of the State in the position of over-parent and trustee for the corporate wealth of the whole community.

We may admit the facts, and join issue with the remedy advocated. Corporate as opposed to individual ownership is not an advance, but a retrogression. It is the tribal system of primitive times. As men

advance in the scale of civilisation, the right of the individual to the fruits of his labour comes to be recognised. At first this is not so. We find all property veated in the community as a whole, and private enterprise is checked because the tribe has to be maintained by merging the unit in the mass. But when a nation is established on a firm basis, then trade and labour are encouraged by securing to each person the profits and rewards of his industry. It has not been proved that collective ownership tends to progress, but rather the reverse. Most men need a stimulus to work their best, and the most universally potent stimulus is the incentive of personal gain. But, apart from the extreme method of reverting to the primitive custom of tribal ownership, we might do much to remedy our many admitted social defects. Those who rear children for the State should receive aid from the State. The man who selfishly shirks his duty should not receive this active encouragement that he does at present. It is quite true that the greatest asset of a country is a race of sturdy, moral, intelligent citizens. It is also true that no real progress can be made except by securing to the individual the enjoyment of the fruits of his industry. The man who earns his eight shillings by honest toil is entitled to spend it as he will, and should not be compelled to throw it into a common fund for the benefit of the lazy and incompetent. It therefore behoves all who believe in the advancement of the human race to sink all minor differences and unite in a sincere effort to remedy admitted evils, to give to all equal opportunities and equal chances; but at the same time to stand firm against any policy that would throw us back on primitive customs, and penalise the prudent and the industrious for the benefit of the thriftless, the careless, and the incompetent. Otherwise it may easily happen that, while Government and Opposition are fighting over matters comparatively trivial, a party that by no means represents a majority may take advantage of this division of forces and commit the country to a policy subversive of its best and truest interests, and opposed to the wishes of the large proportion of its inhabitants.

Any person desiring a supply of apples bearing his family crest has only to send an illustration of it to certain growers at Montreuil, France, and he will duly receive the fruit the following season.

The odd effect is obtained by growing apples in paper bags, which are slipped on when the fruit is about the size of a walnut. Being thus sheltered from the sun, the apples do not colour as they swell, and when fully grown still remain green or yellow. As soon as they reach their maximum size the bags that cover them are replaced by others, on the side of which the desired crest or coat of arms has been cut like a stencil. The sun can now penetrate to that part of the apple exposed, and redden it thoroughly; so that when the bag is again withdrawn the device is seen standing out in red upon the green surface.

To obtain the opposite result—that is, a green device on red ground—the second bag is not used, but the pattern is cut out in paper and stuck on the fruit, the sun colouring all the exposed parts but leaving green the crest or other device which the paper forms. Many Parisian fruiterers have of late years exposed for sale apples with the arms of Russia printed upon them; others have them with monograms, Christian names, arrow pierced hearts, and other devices.

Poet: Good-morning, countless. Did you get my new book I sent you yesterday. Countess: Delightful! I could not sleep till I had read it.

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