

CHAPTER VI

NEGLECTED FACTORS OF THE WORLD PROBLEM

WAR has thrust upon us a new internationalism. To day the world is united by starvation, disease and misery. We are enjoying the ironic internationalism of hatred. The victors are forced to shoulder the burden of the vanquished. International philanthropies and charities are organized. The great flux of immigration and emigration has recommenced. Prosperity is a myth and the rich are called upon to support huge philanthropies, in the futile attempt to sweep back the tide of famine and misery. In the face of this new internationalism, this tangled unity of the world, all proposed political and economic programs reveal a woeful common bankruptcy. They are fragmentary and superficial. None of them go to the root of this unprecedented world problem. Politicians offer political solutions—like the League of

Nations or the limitation of navies Militarists offer new schemes of competitive armament Marxians offer the Third Internationale and industrial revolution Sentimentalists offer charity and philanthropy Coordination or correlation is lacking And matters go steadily from bad to worse

The first essential in the solution of any problem is the recognition and statement of the factors involved Now in this complex problem which to day confronts us no attempt has been made to state the primary factors The statesman believes they are all political Militarists believe they are all military and naval Economists, including under the term the various schools for Socialists believe they are industrial and financial Churchmen look upon them as religious and ethical What is lacking is the recognition of that fundamental factor which reflects and coordinates these essential but incomplete phases of the problem,—the factor of reproduction For in all problems affecting the welfare of a biological species and particularly in all problems of human welfare two fundamental forces work against each other There is hunger as the driving

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force of all our economic industrial and commercial organizations and there is the reproductive impulse in continual conflict with our economic, political settlements race adjustments and the like Official moralists, statesmen politicians philanthropists and economists display an astounding disregard of this second disorganizing factor They treat the world of men as if it were purely a hunger world instead of a hunger sex world Yet there is no phase of human society, no question of politics, economics or industry that is not tied up in almost equal measure with the expression of both of these primordial impulses You cannot sweep back overpowering dynamic instincts by catchwords You can neglect and thwart sex only at your peril You cannot solve the problem of hunger and ignore the problem of sex They are bound up together

While the gravest attention is paid to the problem of hunger and food that of sex is neglected Politicians and social scientists are ready and willing to speak of such things as a high birth rate, infant mortality, the dangers of immigration or over population But

with few exceptions they cannot bring themselves to speak of Birth Control. Until they shall have broken through the traditional inhibitions concerning the discussion of sexual matters until they recognize the force of the sexual instinct and until they recognize Birth Control as the *pivotal factor* in the problem confronting the world to day our statesmen must continue to work in the dark. Political palliatives will be mocked by actuality. Economic nostrums are blown willy nilly in the unending battle of human instincts.

A brief survey of the past three or four centuries of Western civilization suggests the urgent need of a new science to help humanity in the struggle with the vast problem of to day's disorder and danger. That problem as we envisage it, is fundamentally a sexual problem. Ethical, political and economic avenues of approach are insufficient. We must create a new instrument, a new technique to make any adequate solution possible.

The history of the industrial revolution and the dominance of all conquering machinery in Western civilization show the inadequacy of political and economic measures to meet the

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terrific rise in population. The advent of the factory system due especially to the development of machinery at the beginning of the nineteenth century upset all the grandiloquent theories of the previous era. To meet the new situation created by the industrial revolution arose the new science of political economy or economics. Old political methods proved inadequate to keep pace with the problem presented by the rapid rise of the new machine and industrial power. The machine era very shortly and decisively exploded the simple belief that all men are born free and equal. Political power was superseded by economic and industrial power. To sustain their supremacy in the political field governments and politicians allied themselves to the new industrial oligarchy. Old political theories and practices were totally inadequate to control the new situation or to meet the complex problems that grew out of it.

Just as the eighteenth century saw the rise and proliferation of political theories, the nineteenth witnessed the creation and development of the science of economics, which aimed to perfect an instrument for the study and an

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alysis of an industrial society, and to offer a technique for the solution of the multifold problems it presented. But at the present moment, as the outcome of the machine era and competitive populations, the world has been thrown into a new situation, the solution of which is impossible solely by political or economic weapons.

The industrial revolution and the development of machinery in Europe and America called into being a new type of working class. Machines were at first termed 'labor saving devices'. In reality, as we now know, mechanical inventions and discoveries created an unprecedented and increasingly enormous demand for 'labor'. The omnipresent and still existing scandal of child labor is ample evidence of this. Machine production in its opening phases, demanded large concentrated and exploitable populations. Large production and the huge development of international trade through improved methods of transport made possible the maintenance upon a low level of existence of these rapidly increasing proletarian populations. With the rise and spread throughout Europe and America of

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machine production, it is now possible to correlate the expansion of the proletariat. The working classes bred almost automatically to meet the demand for machine serving hands.

The rise in population, the multiplication of proletarian populations as a first result of mechanical industry, the appearance of great centers of population, the so called urban drift, and the evils of overcrowding still remain insufficiently studied and stated. It is a significant though neglected fact that when after long agitation in Great Britain child labor was finally forbidden by law, the supply of children dropped appreciably. No longer of economic value in the factory, children were evidently a drug in the home. Yet it is doubly significant that from this moment British labor began the long unending task of self organization.¹

Nineteenth century economics had no method

¹ It may be well to note in this connection that the decline in the birth rate among the more intelligent classes of British labor followed upon the famous Bradlaugh Besant trial of 1878, the outcome of the attempt of these two courageous Birth Control pioneers to circulate among the workers the work of an American physician, Dr Knowlton's *The Fruits of Philosophy*, advocating Birth Control, and the widespread publicity resulting from this trial.

of studying the interrelation of the biological factors with the industrial Overcrowding overwork the progressive destruction of responsibility by the machine discipline, as is now perfectly obvious had the most disastrous consequences upon human character and human habits² Paternalistic philanthropies and sentimental charities which sprang up like mushrooms only tended to increase the evils of indiscriminate breeding From the physiological and psychological point of view the factory system has been nothing less than catastrophic

Dr Austin Freeman has recently pointed out³ some of the physiological, psychological and racial effects of machinery upon the proletariat the breeders of the world Speaking for Great Britain Dr Freeman suggests that the omnipresence of machinery tends toward the production of large but inferior populations Evidences of biological and racial degeneracy are apparent to this observer

Compared with the African negro he

² Cf *The Creative Impulse in Industry* by Helen Marot
The Instinct of Workmanship by Thorstein Veblen

³ *Social Decay and Regeneration* By R Austin Freeman
London 1921

writes the British sub man is in several respects markedly inferior He tends to be dull he is usually quite helpless and unhandy, he has as a rule no skill or knowledge of handicraft or indeed knowledge of any kind Over population is a phenomenon connected with the survival of the unfit and it is mechanism which has created conditions favorable to the survival of the unfit and the elimination of the fit ' The whole indictment against machinery is summarized by Dr Freeman Mechanism by its reactions on man and his environment is antagonistic to human welfare It has destroyed industry and replaced it by mere labor, it has degraded and vulgarized the works of man it has destroyed social unity and replaced it by social disintegration and class antagonism to an extent which directly threatens civilization it has injuriously affected the structural type of society by developing its organization at the expense of the individual it has endowed the inferior man with political power which he employs to the common disadvantage by creating political institutions of a socially destruc-

tive type and finally by its reactions on the activities of war it constitutes an agent for the wholesale physical destruction of man and his works and the extinction of human culture

It is not necessary to be in absolute agreement with this diagnostician to realize the menace of machinery, which tends to emphasize quantity and mere number at the expense of quality and individuality. One thing is certain. If machinery is detrimental to biological fitness, the machine must be destroyed as it was in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*. But perhaps there is another way of mastering this problem.

Altruism, humanitarianism and philanthropy have aided and abetted machinery in the destruction of responsibility and self-reliance among the least desirable elements of the proletariat. In contrast with the previous epoch of discovery of the New World of exploration and colonization when a centrifugal influence was at work upon the populations of Europe, the advent of machinery has brought with it a counteracting centripetal effect. The result has been the accumulation

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of large urban populations the increase of irresponsibility, and ever widening margin of biological waste

Just as eighteenth century politics and political theories were unable to keep pace with the economic and capitalistic aggressions of the nineteenth century so also we find if we look closely enough that nineteenth century economics is inadequate to lead the world out of the catastrophic situation into which it has been thrown by the débâcle of the World War. Economists are coming to recognize that the purely economic interpretation of contemporary events is insufficient. Too long as one of them has stated orthodox economists have overlooked the important fact that human life is dynamic that change movement evolution, are its basic characteristics that self expression, and therefore freedom of choice and movement are prerequisites to a satisfying human state ⁴

Economists themselves are breaking with the old dismal science of the Manchester school with its sterile study of supply and demand,

⁴ Carlton H. Parker *The Casual Laborer and other essays*
p. 30

of prices and exchange of wealth and labor Like the Chicago Vice Commission nineteenth century economists (many of whom still survive into our own day) considered sex merely as something to be legislated out of existence They had the idea that wealth consisted solely of material things used to promote the welfare of certain human beings Their idea of capital was somewhat confused They apparently decided that capital was merely that part of capital used to produce profit Prices exchanges, commercial statistics and financial operations comprised the subject matter of these older economists It would have been considered unscientific to take into account the human factors involved They might study the wear and tear and depreciation of machinery but the depreciation or destruction of the human race did not concern them Under "wealth" they never included the vast, wasted treasury of human life and human expression

Economists to day are awake to the imperative duty of dealing with the whole of human nature, with the relation of men women, and children to their environment—physical

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and psychic as well as social of dealing with all those factors which contribute to human sustenance happiness and welfare The economist at length investigates human motives Economics outgrows the outworn metaphysical preconceptions of nineteenth century theory To day we witness the creation of a new welfare or social economics based on a fuller and more complete knowledge of the human race upon a recognition of sex as well as of hunger in brief, of physiological instincts and psychological demands The newer economists are beginning to recognize that their science heretofore failed to take into account the most vital factors in modern industry—it failed to foresee the inevitable consequences of compulsory motherhood, the catastrophic effects of child labor upon racial health the overwhelming importance of national vitality and well being the international ramifications of the population problem the relation of indiscriminate breeding to feeble mindedness, and industrial inefficiency It speculated too little or not at all on human motives Human nature riots through the traditional economic structure, as Carl

ton Parker pointed out, with ridicule and destruction, the old fashioned economist looked on helpless and aghast

Inevitably we are driven to the conclusion that the exclusively economic interpretation of contemporary history is inadequate to meet the present situation. In his suggestive book, *The Acquisitive Society*, R H Tawney, arrives at the conclusion that obsession by economic issues is as local and transitory as it is repulsive and disturbing. To future generations it will appear as pitiable as the obsession of the seventeenth century by religious quarrels appears to day, indeed it is less rational, since the object with which it is concerned is less important. And it is a poison which inflames every wound and turns each trivial scratch into a malignant ulcer. Society will not solve the particular problems of industry until that poison is expelled and it has learned to see industry in its proper perspective. *If it is to do that it must rearrange the scale of values*. It must regard economic interests as one element in life, not as the whole of life.

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⁵ R H Tawney *The Acquisitive Society* p 184

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In neglecting or minimizing the great factor of sex in human society the Marxian doctrine reveals itself as no stronger than orthodox economics in guiding our way to a sound civilization. It works within the same intellectual limitations. Much as we are indebted to the Marxians for pointing out the injustice of modern industrialism, we should never close our eyes to the obvious limitations of their own 'economic interpretation of history. While we must recognize the great historical value of Marx it is now evident that his vision of the class struggle of the bitter irreconcilable warfare between the capitalist and working classes was based not upon historical analysis but upon an unconscious dramatization of a superficial aspect of capitalistic regime.

In emphasizing the conflict between the classes, Marx failed to recognize the deeper unity of the proletariat and the capitalist. Nineteenth century capitalism had in reality engendered and cultivated the very type of working class best suited to its own purpose—an inert, docile irresponsible and submissive class, progressively incapable of effective and aggressive organization. Like the economists

of the Manchester school Marx failed to recognize the interplay of human instincts in the world of industry. All the virtues were embodied in the beloved proletariat, all the villainies in the capitalists. The greatest asset of the capitalism of that age was, as a matter of fact, the uncontrolled breeding among the laboring classes. The intelligent and self-conscious section of the workers was forced to bear the burden of the unemployed and the poverty-stricken.

Marx was fully aware of the consequences of this condition of things, but shut his eyes tightly to the cause. He pointed out that capitalistic power was dependent upon the reserve army of labor, surplus labor, and a wide margin of unemployment. He practically admitted that overpopulation was the inevitable soil of predatory capitalism. But he disregarded the most obvious consequence of that admission. It was all very dramatic and grandiloquent to tell the workingmen of the world to unite, that they had 'nothing but their chains to lose and the world to gain.' Cohesion of any sort, united and voluntary organization, as events have proved, is im-

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possible in populations bereft of intelligence, self discipline and even the material necessities of life and cheated by their desires and ignorance into unrestrained and uncontrolled fertility

In pointing out the limitations and fallacies of the orthodox Marxian opinion, my purpose is not to depreciate the efforts of the Socialists aiming to create a new society but rather to emphasize what seems to me the greatest and most neglected truth of our day —Unless sexual science is incorporated as an integral part of world statesmanship and the pivotal importance of Birth Control is recognized in any program of reconstruction, all efforts to create a new world and a new civilization are foredoomed to failure

We can hope for no advance until we attain a new conception of sex not as a merely propagative act not merely as a biological necessity for the perpetuation of the race but as a psychic and spiritual avenue of expression. It is the limited inhibited conception of sex that vitiates so much of the thought and idealization of the Eugenists

Like most of our social idealists, statesmen, politicians and economists some of the Eugenists suffer intellectually from a restricted and inhibited understanding of the function of sex. This limited understanding, this narrowness of vision which gives rise to most of the misconceptions and condemnations of the doctrine of Birth Control is responsible for the failure of politicians and legislators to enact practical statutes or to remove traditional obscenities from the law books. The most encouraging sign at present is the recognition by modern psychology of the central importance of the sexual instinct in human society, and the rapid spread of this new concept among the more enlightened sections of the civilized communities. The new conception of sex has been well stated by one to whom the debt of contemporary civilization is well nigh immeasurable. Sexual activity, Havelock Ellis has written, is not merely a baldly propagative act nor when propagation is put aside is it merely the relief of distended vessels. It is something more even than the foundation of great social institutions. It is the function

by which all the finer activities of the organism, physical and psychic, may be developed and satisfied ⁶

No less than seventy years ago, a profound but neglected thinker George Drysdale emphasized the necessity of a thorough understanding of man's sexual nature in approaching economic, political and social problems.

Before we can undertake the calm and impartial investigation of any social problem, we must first of all free ourselves from all those sexual prejudices which are so vehement and violent and which so completely distort our vision of the external world. Society as a whole has yet to fight its way through an almost impenetrable forest of sexual taboos. Drysdale's words have lost none of their truth even to day. There are few things from which humanity has suffered more than the degraded and irreverent feelings of mystery and shame that have been attached to the genital and excretory organs. The former have been regarded like their corresponding mental passions, as something of a lower and baser nature, tending to degrade and carnalize

⁶ Medical Review of Reviews Vol XXVI p 116

man by their physical appetites But we can not take a debasing view of any part of our humanity without becoming degraded in our whole being ⁷

Drysdale moreover clearly recognized the social crime of entrusting to sexual barbarians the duty of legislating and enforcing laws detrimental to the welfare of all future generations They trust blindly to authority for the rules they blindly lay down ' he wrote perfectly unaware of the awful and complicated nature of the subject they are dealing with so confidently and of the horrible evils their unconsidered statements are attended with They themselves break through the most fundamentally important laws daily in utter unconsciousness of the misery they are causing to their fellows

Psychologists to day courageously emphasize the integral relationship of the expression of the sexual instinct with every phase of human activity Until we recognize this central fact, we cannot understand the implications and the sinister significance of superficial attempts to apply rosewater remedies to social evils,—by

⁷ The Elements of Social Science London 1854

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the enactment of restrictive and superficial legislation, by wholesale philanthropies and charities by publicly burying our heads in the sands of sentimentality. Self appointed censors, grossly immoral moralists make shift legislators, all face a heavy responsibility for the miseries diseases and social evils they perpetuate or intensify by enforcing the primitive taboos of aboriginal customs traditions, and outworn laws which at every step hinder the education of the people in the scientific knowledge of their sexual nature. Puritanic and academic taboo of sex in education and religion is as disastrous to human welfare as prostitution or the venereal scourges.

We are compelled squarely to face the distorting influences of biologically aborted reformers as well as the wastefulness of seducers. Dr Edward A Kempf recently declared "Man arose from the ape and inherited his passions which he can only refine but dare not attempt to castrate unless he would destroy the fountains of energy that maintain civilization and make life worth living and the world worth beautifying." We do not have a problem that is to be solved by

making repressive laws and executing them Nothing will be more disastrous Society must make life worth the living and the refining for the individual by conditioning him to love and to seek the love object in a manner that reflects a constructive effect upon his fellow men and by giving him suitable opportunities The virility of the automatic apparatus is destroyed by excessive gormandizing or hunger by excessive wealth or poverty, by excessive work or idleness by sexual abuse or intolerant prudishness The noblest and most difficult art of all is the raising of human thoroughbreds' ⁸

⁸ Proceedings of the International Conference of Women Physicians Vol IV pp 66 67 New York 1920