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EDITORIAL

## LESS LUCKY THAN ALLAH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A** MR. MACKAYE—like a star that suddenly lunges out of the vast recesses of darkness in space—has just struck the Lick telescope in the editorial observatory of the New York *Independent* with a “new system of social philosophy” entitled “Economy of Happiness,” which the astronomer (or is it astrologer?) in the aforesaid editorial observatory announces to his wrapt readers as the Allah who has the right “plan” for solving the Social Question, and whose work is marked with “independence of thinking.”

No doubt Mr. Mackaye’s thinking is “independent.” ’Tis nothing if it is not independent—independent of facts, independent of sense, independent of science. The gist of Mr. Mackaye’s “new social philosophy” is the resuscitation of “the scientific verity” of the Malthusian principle.

The Malthusian principle, as everybody knows or should know, is that population increases in geometric, the means of subsistence in arithmetic ratio. In other words that population grows faster, a good deal faster, than the means of subsistence which Labor can squeeze out of Nature. To sum up the principle in the pictorially forcible language of Malthus himself: “To him for whom there are no covers at the banquet table of Nature, Nature says—be gone!” The capitalist class of Malthus’s days greeted the utterance with long, loud and prolonged applause. It was no accident, it was one of those wisely contrived Providential “coincidences,” that the utterer of such inhuman balderdash was a minister of the Gospel. The coincidence placed of {on?} historic record the inherent pharisaism of the capitalist class.

Socialism claims, and has proven in detail, that affluence, that security for the morrow, that freedom from animal and brutalizing toil for mere physical existence, that leisure for the development of the moral, spiritual and aesthetic parts of man

was an impossibility until to-day, when the mammoth machine and human co-operation can render production so abundant as to meet and subserve all human needs and aspirations. This notwithstanding, there never was a time since recorded history when human labor could not satisfy animal needs. As a matter of fact, limiting ourselves to the epoch of Malthus and since, this other is true also:—due to the despotism of one set of humanity over the other, the bulk of the soil was pre-empted by a few, was blasted with unproductiveness, and the bulk of the race was cramped for the means of life. If a man is hung up long enough by his heels he will die of congestion. As well say that because men, held in such abnormal posture, must die of congestion, therefore congestion is a natural and scientific law—as well say that as to say that, because the social, the man-made conditions in which Malthus lived and which he liked were such as to render subsistence obviously below population, therefore it is Nature that says “Begone!” to those for whom the hogs at Nature’s banquet table allow no seating space. It is the one distinguished merit of Henry George that he collated all the scientific facts and the scientific reasoning which disproved Malthusianism, brought the argument abreast of his time, and showed that civilization had turned the tables upon Malthus—proved the Socialist contention that the productivity of Labor had become potentially so abundant that not only was Malthus checkmated, but the exact opposite of Malthusianism established.

Indeed, it takes an utterly “independent” mind—independent of all the bonds that a sober mind gladly submits to be fettered by—for Mr. Mackaye to bolster up Malthus with the argument that “the declining birth rate” is “a complete vindication” of Malthusianism. It takes such an “independent” mind to make such a declaration—in these days when scores of inventions, calculated to promote the productivity of Labor, are kept under lock and key lest supply become so great as to cheapen goods in the hands of the capitalist class—in these days when blissful peach crops are dumped into the Raritan River to reduce supply and thereby increase prices—in these days when apple crops are left rotting on trees, despite all the appliances and means to boot are on hand to preserve them and bring them to market—in these days when areas of the nation’s territory, vast enough to support our whole population, are “fenced in” and virtually removed from existence—in

these days when, periodically, production is deliberately stopped and men are left to starve because of “over-production”—in short, in these days when scarcity is artificially created in the interest of about one per cent of our population. Unquestionably, the palm of “Independence of Thought” must be awarded to Mr. Mackaye.

For all this Mr. Mackaye is less lucky than Allah. Allah never once was jilted by his Mohamed for a fairer-seeming charmer. Allah remained God, and Mohamed HIS prophet. A less constant Mohamed to his Allahs is the Editorial astronomer who has just invented the Mackaye Allah. One week it was Prof. Giddings who was the Allah of that Mohamed, and was announced as THE THING OF THINGS; another week the Allahship was conferred upon some other luminary. We have a distinct recollection of at least four distinct Allahs having been successively set up and jilted by this fickle Mohamed as the real soluters of the Social Problem. Mr. Mackaye is the latest.—Next!?

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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