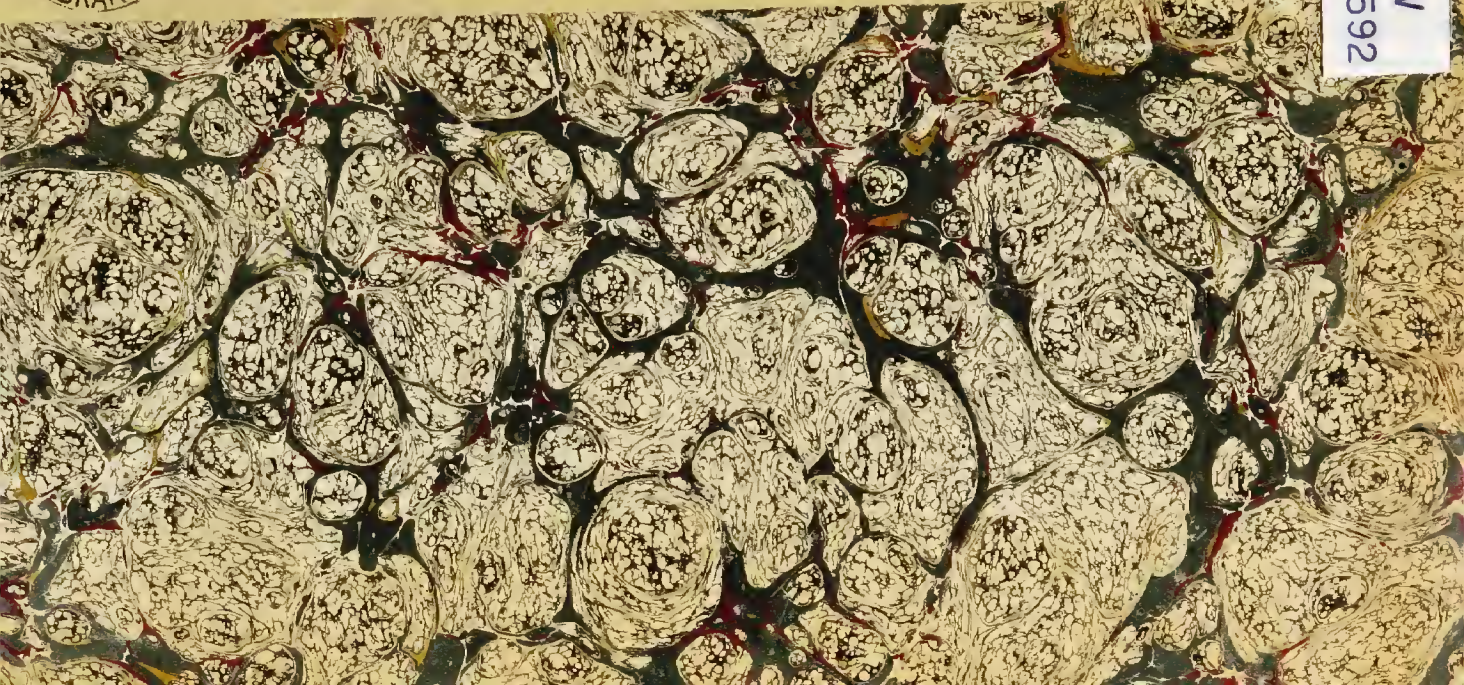
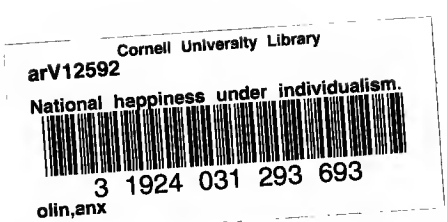
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NATIONAL HAPPINESS

UNDER

INDIVIDUALISM.

AN

EXPLANATION AND SOLUTION

OF THE

POVERTY AND RICHES PROBLEM

BY

BINNIE DUNLOP, M.B.

BRASTED, KENT.

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NATIONAL HAPPINESS

UNDER

INDIVIDUALISM.

The material basis of National Happiness is that a country should not have too many inhabitants for comfort nor too few for safety. This statement, I hope, will be regarded as both true and unobjectionable by most of my readers. For it expresses the underlying idea of this essay, and suggests my view of the great social problems often referred to by political writers and speakers as the Poverty and Riches problem.

Fellow-men consist of fellow-countrymen and foreign-countrymen. Therefore National Happiness depends on the avoidance of the fundamental causes of unhappiness with fellow-countrymen and foreign-countrymen.

The fundamental cause of unhappiness with fellow-countrymen is unhappy competition for the means of healthy subsistence; that is, excess of individuals over the means of healthy subsistence; that is, Overpopulation. The fundamental cause of unhappiness with foreign-countrymen is foreign aggression or the fear of it; that is, insufficiency of defenders; that is, Dangerous Underpopulation. Therefore National Happiness depends fundamentally on the avoidance of Overpopulation and Dangerous Underpopulation.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the subject, according to my view of it, divides into two parts :—

I. Fellow-Countrymen—Overpopulation—Poverty;

Foreign-countrymen — Dangerous Underpopulation — Riches; or more correctly, as I shall explain,

II. Foreign-Countrymen—Dangerous Underpopulation—Luxuries.

I.—Individualism and Overpopulation.

That Poverty is essentially Overpopulation may be shown in two ways. Firstly, both can be defined as 'excess of individuals over the means of healthy subsistence.' Secondly, a really complete attempt to cure Poverty by taxing the rich—meaning as that policy does, a continuous elimination of the rich, and then of the merely relatively rich, to be taxed—must end in converting the local Poverty into a general Poverty; that is, the local or individualistic Overpopulation into a general or socialistic Overpopulation. Poverty, in fact, may be regarded as individualistic Overpopulation. Therefore to understand Poverty and its prevention it is necessary to understand Overpopulation and its prevention.

A system of government that is to succeed in securing continuous National Happiness must, then, be based on some principle which continuously checks the natural tendency to Overpopulation; that is, on some principle which continuously checks the natural tendency to beget too many children, and directs the consequently-required voluntary restriction of the natural birth-rate; that is, on some principle which supplies a continuous and working answer to the question: "Who are not to beget children?" Such a principle, as the answer will show, must be either the

socialistic one or the individualistic one; in other words, reveals the important fact that a people must make a definite choice, for their system of government, between Individualism and Socialism. The socialist says: "Those whom the State thinks least worthy." The individualist says: "*Those who cannot afford to maintain them properly*"; his assumption being that if subsistence can be found for children, these will be able to find it for themselves when they grow up. Since to avoid causing unnecessary suffering is a moral obligation, this *economic* preventive of the unhappiness called Overpopulation may be termed *the individualistic Law of Parental Responsibility.*

Leaving the main argument for a moment, I might here make a few observations called-for and suggested by what I have been saying of Overpopulation. (1) The criticism may well be offered that 'excess of individuals over the means of healthy subsistence' *would even develop among childless adults* (though such ought to be able easily to undersell in the labour market the parents of young and dependent families) *if they were sufficiently idle or improvident.* That is to say that altogether to avoid Overpopulation, observance is required not merely of the Law of Parental Responsibility, but of the more comprehensive Law of *Personal* Responsibility, namely, that individuals must maintain themselves and any children they beget. But the childless poor are easily relieved. Their poverty-causing misfortune or vice dying with them, it does not lead to the serious chronic Poverty I am here concerned with. I feel justified, therefore, in affirming that to prevent Overpopulation it is practically sufficient to insist strongly on the Law of Parental Responsibility. (2) Immigration

must also be regarded as a cause of Overpopulation. But it is an external cause with an obvious remedy, so not one calling for more than mention here. (3) A struggle in existence is unavoidable—and would be under Socialism too, as already suggested. But with civilised communities it ought to be a struggle to qualify for parenthood—not a savage, lower-animal struggle to live.

The main argument may now be resumed by applying to Poverty what has above been said of Overpopulation. To avoid Poverty, then, individualists must insist that those are not to beget children who cannot afford to maintain them properly; in other words, must insist on the responsibility of parents for the proper maintenance of their children.

Under modern conditions proper maintenance includes education*, in addition to ordinary home-maintenance. A State which grants free elementary education, loses, among other things, an opportunity for imposing a further restraint (through school fees and attendance at school) on the tendency to Overpopulation. But in spite of free *elementary* education, Poverty continues, and more or less in the following painfully familiar sequence: child and juvenile wage-earners, unskilled workers, unemployed, unemployables (and un-emigrationables), sweated workers, wage-earning mothers, neglected infants and children, ill-kept homes, alcoholism and crime. Clearly, therefore, proper maintenance also includes *occupational* education; and this must somehow be made compulsory in order that the entrances

*I often think that in a country that was really great, or promising greatness, the teaching profession would be the best paid and most attractive one.

to blind-alleys of employment may be closed to juveniles. Legislation, again, with this effect, would act as a very important check to Overpopulation by prolonging the home-maintenance period; and even if free technical schools could replace the more natural apprenticeship in field and factory.

But beyond the gratuitous provision of education (elementary and occupational) Individualism surely cannot go. Here surely is a new and urgent line of demarcation between that principle and Socialism. The individualistic State, without rapidly getting into serious financial difficulties, cannot relieve parents of the responsibility for their children's *home-maintenance* (feeding, clothing and housing). The futility of attempting to cure Poverty by taxing the richer to relieve the poorer—a policy of endowing, and so of continuously increasing*, the dependent stocks—has already been shown. As must, in the end, at all events, be obvious, such policy is based on the denial of the right of any man to be richer than his neighbours whatever his industry and ability, and is therefore the negation of Individualism.—This indicates, too, what ought to be the individualist's objection to the Right to Work claim. In so far as it is a claim not merely to wages but to family-wages, it is the individualistically impossible

*This is denied by those of the modern Liberals, who claim to be individualists. They assert, on the contrary, that if the poor be but financially assisted to attain a certain 'minimum standard of comfort,' they will beget fewer children. The crucial question however, is, Will they reduce the numbers of their offspring so far as to cease the perpetual overcrowding of the labour market—that is, so far as to make continuation of such State charity possible? I wish Liberals would realise that their undoubtedly attractive policy of effectively relieving, out of taxes on the rich, all cases of Poverty that arise from genuine invalidity and unemployment, could only go on indefinitely if wage-earners were not to have more than three children per family.

claim to a Right to Marry—the individualistically impossible claim to a right, of the poorer at the expense of the richer, to multiply freely till none was richer.—I might here make bold to add my opinion of eleemosynary efforts in general, that relief which has the effect of reproducing in another generation the misfortune or vice relieved, is folly—not charity.

Practically, then, under modern conditions, avoidance of Poverty requires that no man begets children unless he has sufficient wages to provide them with proper home-maintenance, and has insured himself against reduction or stoppage of these wages from any cause (under-employment, unemployment, sickness, accident and death), till the completion of his children's apprenticeship.

A child cannot easily be maintained properly for less than a shilling a day, if even for that in its later years of dependence. There certainly ought, therefore, to be only one child for every (at the lowest) seven shillings a week of wages beyond the sum (£1 ?) required to keep the parents. To encourage and establish this custom should be the aim of all social reformers who wish to see wages really raised; should be the aim of the three co-operating (?) groups of active individualists: (1) the political, who are fighting Socialism; (2) the philanthropic, who are fighting Poverty; and (3) the eugenistic, who are fighting Race Degeneration.*

*Speaking generally, the greater a man's inborn mental and physical capacities the greater his earnings. In other words, eugenic efficiency is proportionate to economic efficiency. Therefore Race Degeneration must accompany the multiplication of the economically unfit and less fit at the expense of (and consequently diminution of) the economically fit. 'Social reform' in the last half century has been largely the endowment of the families worth less than £2 a week, by those worth more.

The fundamental cause of the Poverty of the poor is their (mostly encouraged and so far pardonable) improvident propagation. Excessive families mean inability to save; want of savings mean inability to protest effectively against low wages; low wages, again, mean further inability to save. The real cause of the Poverty that ensues when rich landlords or employers do not renew agreements with poor tenants or employees is this want of savings on the part of the latter. It is surely unjust to deny to the rich the liberty, which all other men possess and use, of renewing agreements or not according as it suits them. The rich (quâ rich—see Part II.) do not cause the Poverty of the poor and should not be taxed to relieve it. True, they neglect to help in discouraging the birth of necessitous children, and might reasonably on this account be called upon to support them—except that such endowment of dependence would involve the sacrifice of the individualistic régime, as I must keep pointing out.

Are the children of those who disobey the Law of Parental Responsibility to be the victims of a *laissez faire* Individualism, and be left to bear the consequences? The humanitarian individualist can hardly tolerate that, much as it would diminish the present numbers of children born to neglect. Here exactly is his problem, how to enforce parental responsibility without letting the children suffer. The solution would seem to be—*State emigration of the necessitous children.* Even assuming that some fiscal reform doubled wages,* it would mean but a brief post-

*A large assumption, though it must be admitted, of course, that *Protection implies* (plus a small tax on every inhabitant to defray the cost of levying them) *taxes in favour of the workers* at the expense (1) of the non-workers *i.e.*, the real and the so-called 'idle-rich' and foreign visitors, and (2) of those workers who could not get their wages and salaries raised.

ponement of this, or some equally drastic solution of the Poverty problem. The *home-maintenance* of children will soon be all that is left of parental responsibility for individualists to defend; it is surely the last ditch for their retreating forces. I challenge individualists to produce any other practicable policy* for checking chronic Poverty and its sequel Socialism, than this one of child emigration.

Therefore all children and juveniles persistently sent to school or work insufficiently fed, clothed and cared-for should be taken over by the Poor Law authorities, and emigrated, the parents by way of deterrence being made to contribute as far as possible to the cost. Were this proposal acceptable to the Colonies, and adopted, further reform of the present Poor Law (except as regards the detention of vagrants and the feeble-minded) would hardly be necessary. For in this way can humanely be enforced the Law of Parental Responsibility by which Individualism prevents Poverty and Overpopulation.

As an appendix to Part I., I shall briefly give what I think is England's special case for State emigration of the necessitous children. For her's is more than the simple problem of unemployment and under-employment at home,

*Unless any of the following be deemed practicable (1) State segregation of necessitous children, parents or families, till such time as they could no longer reproduce themselves. (2) Encouragement of Malthusianism—late marriage and small families—by the institution, say, of a State marriage-fee of £50, which would also be a family insurance policy. (3) State encouragement of Neo-Malthusianism—early marriage and small families. Are there any ethical objections to the use of 'contraceptive means' by parents who already have as many children as they can do justice to? I have not succeeded in finding any medical objections.

brought about by failure to encourage observance of the Law of Parental Responsibility. Her's is a duplex imperial problem—too many Britishers at home (to say nothing of the underselling aliens), and too few Britishers in the Colonies.

But Britain's excess population is practically an excess of town-bred workers. The Colonies, on the other hand, are only eager for immigrants who will help them usefully and sympathetically to occupy their dangerously underpopulated territories; are only eager, that is, for out-door and in-door farm servants of British extraction. The solution of the difficulty (and of the imperial problem) is the compromise of child-emigration. In no other way can Britain supply this demand for farm-workers, and of both sexes in equal proportions, than in the form of children or *potential* farm-workers.

Experience appears already to have proved that even slum children do well when sent out to farms and farm-schools. They quickly develop there into useful colonials. Notwithstanding this bright prospect, it may seem harsh in many cases that they should be taken away from their parents. So it must be duly emphasised that it is as the only means of rescuing them from lives of anxious struggle, privation, and often failure at home; and also as the means of easing the terrible competition pressure on all those parents (invariably overlooked by public and private philanthropists) honourably striving and just succeeding to maintain their and their children's independence. And lastly, from the mother-country point of view, it may be said that State emigration of the necessitous children would bring about an immediate and steadily progressive

reduction of the suffering and expense of Poverty, and of its Socialism breeding discontent. For it would mean a rapid elimination, though a humane one, of the dependent stocks; a direct inculcation of the much-needed lesson of parental responsibility; and, in so far as it relieved distress without reproducing it, the carrying-out of a real and imperial charity.

II.—Individualism and Dangerous Underpopulation.

Dangerous Underpopulation, the avoidance of which under Individualism is now to be discussed, will only be a possibility, of course, so long as there is such an institution as war. Underpopulation might be described as the occupation of a country by fewer inhabitants than it could support healthily, Dangerous Underpopulation as the occupation of a country by fewer inhabitants than it could support healthily and safely. (To exclude, however, the unnecessary consideration of new countries with vast unoccupied areas, I shall only discuss here the Underpopulation of countries whose land has all been taken up.)

A people's expenditure, like an individual's, falls under two heads—necessaries and luxuries. The more they spend on luxuries the less they spend on necessaries. This means that the more they spend on luxuries the less they spend on *population;* for in a country that has to keep prepared for war, necessaries may be defined as whatever makes for war-like efficiency. Although this depends also on armaments, training and organisation, it depends essentially on numbers; that is, on the existence of a sufficiency of inhabitants.

A country, therefore, may be said to be *underpopulated* when its inhabitants use a portion of its resources for the

production of luxuries (not for export, of course, but for their own use), and *dangerously underpopulated* when its inhabitants use an excessive portion of its resources for the production of luxuries. (So the Underpopulation of new countries with vast unoccupied areas may be partly due to expenditure on luxuries.) What constitutes Dangerous Underpopulation depends, it need hardly be remarked, upon various factors, and must be decided by each country for itself. Thus a country that is an island, or is mountainous, or is very large, or has alliances with neighbours, might need a lesser density of population to defend it against invasion than other countries without these advantages.

The following statements will help to illustrate my idea that expenditure on luxuries causes Underpopulation, and may cause Dangerous Underpopulation (insufficiency of population to provide the men and money required for national defence). Sums are spent on luxuries by the rich, which, if invested in companies producing necessaries, would (besides giving employment, as expenditure and investments in luxuries do) would increase and cheapen necessaries, thereby reducing the cost of living for all. But at the same time it must be acknowledged, (1) that many married couples of moderate means, were they to forego luxuries, could afford larger families; (2) that many wage-earners, were they to forego luxuries, would be able to bring up healthily the children they have—thereby saving the children, the rates or the charities; and (3) that many men in comfortable circumstances delay marriage, or remain bachelors, rather than forego luxuries.

To control Underpopulation—that is, to prevent it becoming Dangerous Underpopulation—it is therefore

necessary to control a people's expenditure on luxuries; it is necessary, that is, to tax luxuries. Moreover, it is necessary to spend the proceeds in making good as far as possible the national weakening which the expenditure on luxuries is responsible for; that is, to spend the proceeds on the national defences. And since the amount of weakening is proportionate to the amount spent on luxuries, it is necessary to tax them on their capital value. In short, *any required Army and Navy should be financed as far as possible by taxes on the capital value of luxuries*—if such taxation be practicable. But luxuries, according to my view of them, cannot reasonably be taxed for any other purpose.

Undeveloped or under-developed land might be regarded as a luxury. Taxation of land on its capital value would either induce its owners to put such land to its maximum use (by fully building on it or fully cultivating it, as the case might be) or would make them—if need be with income from other sources—contribute to the national defences something of its defence-equivalent or population-equivalent in money. The following are other possibly taxable luxuries: numerous servants, two or more residences, yachts, pleasure horses and motor-cars; many entertainments and all betting transactions; private collections of pictures, objets d'art and jewellery; also numerous articles in the way of drugs, drinks, foods and dress.

I may now give my view of the frequent *implication* in the Poverty and Riches phrase, that the Wealth of the rich causes the Poverty of the poor.* If luxury-users

*In Part I., I indicated how the poor breed misery for themselves and cheap labour for the capitalists.

be not taxed on the capital value of their luxuries to make some compensation for the weakening they cause, they *do* unjustly put an extra burden of taxation, for national defence, on necessaries; that is, on non-luxury-users. So that if luxury-users were invariably the rich, and non-luxury-users were invariably the poor, there would indeed be much in the 'implication.' Taxation of luxuries on their capital value for the national defences, however, would help to remove any economic injustice which the rich may be doing to the poor. It would certainly help to remove the undoubted injustice just mentioned, which rich and poor luxury-users are doing to rich and poor non-luxury-users.

Another deduction from my necessaries and luxuries argument is the unfairness of making the rich pay super-taxes and death duties. If they are supposed to pay these in lieu of taxes on luxuries, it is inequitable to whatever degree they may be non-luxury-users. For example, there are possibly multi-millionaires who should be taxed less than some other, say, semi-millionaires. A multi-millionaire may be a man living comparatively simply on £500 a year, spending the remainder of his income on further investments; that is (like all investors in companies which produce necessaries) lending his money to the public for the public good; in other words, using his Riches to cheapen necessaries. Such a man is, in effect, employing his money as if it belonged to his fellow-men, and he had been appointed at a salary of £500 to invest it for them. Whereas, the semi-millionaire may be spending £10,000 a year on (necessaries-enhancing) luxuries.—It should also be noted that one man may thus spend, more injuriously to the nation, his earned £1,000 a year than another does

his unearned £1,000.—The idea, too, of taxing a bachelor simply because he is a bachelor, is similarly unjust. It may not be a selfish preference for luxuries which keeps him single. Taxation of luxuries on their capital value would make the necessary discrimination between the (nationally speaking) good and bad celibates.

I might sum up Part II.,* then, by saying that there would be (1) no unjust taxation of non-luxury-users; (2) a cheapening of necessaries (a nationally and eugenically useful encouragement, in effect, of the homely and thrifty); and (3) an incentive to luxury-users to exercise their considerable influence in the cause of international peace —if luxuries could be taxed on their capital value to maintain the Army and Navy, and the remaining expenses be met by a uniform and universal income-tax.

Conclusion.

It is surely time that individualists began to realise what Individualism means, and how vulnerable it is to socialistic attacks. If they *freely yield* to plausible appeals for extensions of State maintenance, their régime must speedily advance towards bankruptcy and Socialism. If, failing strictly to enforce the fundamental individualistic Law of Parental Responsibility, they *grudgingly and*

*Lest it be supposed that I regard legislation for the avoidance of Dangerous Underpopulation, as next in order of importance to legislation for the avoidance of Overpopulation, I would like to say that I look upon the following as *the two reforms most urgently required*: (1) that people should not beget more children than they can afford to maintain properly; (2) that Parliaments should not have power to pass measures by narrow majorities, *i.e.*, by smaller than two-thirds majorities.

partially yield. Poverty and the general discontent continue. Then the socialists say that Individualism has failed, when it is only pseudo-Individualism that has failed. So either let us adopt Socialism frankly and intelligently, or let us give Individualism what chance we still can *by drawing the line at home-maintenance,* and by beginning to encourage people not to have more children than they can easily afford to feed, clothe and house adequately.

Laissez faire Individualism is, as I have suggested perhaps as impossible as pseudo-Individualism; (1) because the freedom which it grants to individuals to decide for themselves how many children they can afford to maintain properly, may be mis-used to bring children into the world doomed to starve; (2) because the freedom which it grants to individuals to spend as they like, may be mis-used (from the nation's warlike efficiency point of view) to spend excessively on luxuries.

So in my opinion the Poverty and Riches problem is really the two problems of Poverty and Luxuries—*the two problems of excessive families and excessive luxuries.* I conclude, therefore, by asking consideration for the modified Individualism I have been advocating, which—by interfering with the liberty of the poor and the liberty of luxury-users in the directions indicated—would secure the material basis of National Happiness; namely, the avoidance of too many inhabitants for comfort and of too few for safety; that is, the avoidance of Overpopulation and Dangerous Underpopulation.

