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A New Proposal for Guild Organisation.

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We have now seen that every human society consists of three kinds of association. Steiner's argument in the *Threefold Commonwealth* is that the State therefore requires its three distinct and independent organisations. It remains to show that this idea is not one which would disintegrate the State, as Steiner's opponents have, of course, argued. On the contrary the threefold organisation is the only basis of enduring social unity.

In circles where socialistic schemes are discussed, the talk is of social institutions, and seldom of social men. What is proposed is the politics of a Socialism, not the nature of a social man. Quite rightly, of course, from the point of view of the *Threefold Commonwealth*. The perfecting of the political and the perfecting of the spiritual are two different spheres. The shaping of man's institutions, and the shaping of his soul are two separate works. You cannot discuss them at one and the same time, unless you carefully keep them distinguished. Yet, equally, of course, they have everything to do with each other. Neither can progress without the other. Imagine the population of England to be magically exchanged for a population of Hottentots; there is no question but that all English institutions would be ruined. The judges would adapt law, the priests religion, even the 'bus drivers would adapt transport, to their own Hottentot natures, and not even the external form of English civilisation would last a year. But we need not go so far into fantasy to realise that men can only live according to institutions of which they have themselves produced the Idea. Give them an institution more advanced than they could themselves have conceived, and they will either destroy it, or fail to work it to its full capacity.

Now this is not to say that nothing can be done without a "change of heart" – like certain obstructionists, who thereupon make no effort to change any heart, not even their own. It is to say that the life of the spirit and the life of politics, while eternally different, are also indissolubly united, like stalk and flower. A "change of heart" – which is also a higher perception – immediately shows itself in the effort towards better institutions. And a better institution, in its turn, at once gives men truer perceptions and clearer emotions. The third requirement – a better productive system – depends upon these two, as they upon it. Intellectually considered, they are all different; what makes them one is *reality* itself, the substratum of thought.

Briefly to summarise their differences:-

The training of the emotional and intellectual nature is the *Spiritual Life*. Everyone is involved in it; but it has its own peculiar character, and must inevitably have its own organisation, which cannot be democratic. The places of power in the spiritual life are attained by one thing only – by spiritual power. The writers whom people cannot help reading, the speakers whom they crowd to hear, and (much more) the thinkers from whom these speakers and writers derive their inspiration – these are the real pontiffs, in this and every age. But their power in the spiritual life is not greater than the power of any individuals who show, by beauty and dignity of manner, mood or movement, the supremacy and freedom of the spirit within them. The spiritual life needs for its

health nourishment from the highest regions of thought and emotion. In our age, State education and the exaggerated economic problem have given it garbage to feed upon, and its condition is desperate. As it is the life of the freeing of the innermost and highest in man, it is pre-eminently the life of FREEDOM.

The designing of communal laws and institutions, the sphere of politics is the *Life of Rights*. Since institutions must be worked by all, and cannot much surpass current ideas about them, this life must be democratically based. Its places of leadership must go by election. Though it settles questions ultimately by the vote of the majority, it discusses them in relation to criteria of *Right*. This life is satisfactory just so far as it is felt that the majority are voting in accordance with what discussion has proved to be right. Now it is evident that the criteria of Right flow into the political life from the spiritual. That is their living relation. And as the political life interprets rights as they apply to all men with distinction, it is essentially the life of EQUALITY.

Now for the *Economic Life*. The co-operation of productive associations and individuals is not, and cannot be, democratically organised. Nevertheless, it has the least right of all three spheres to be in a state of individualist anarchy. To say, as Steiner does, that it must be allowed to organise itself in its own interests, is not at all to countenance its present condition of mutual destruction and chaos. The economic life needs an organisation centred in its own implicit idea, which idea is the free exchange of all the goods and services that we have the will and capacity to produce. Inherent in the economic idea, therefore is a money or credit system subservient to this free exchange, and existing solely to facilitate it.

Now those who are familiar with the history of the New Economic principles since their first advocacy by Major Douglas will remember how difficult it was to keep its opponents to the point of economics. Business men – of the supposed “hard” or “sound” varieties – were as incapable as idealists of believing that an economic problem should be related to purely economic principles. When we said it was impossible to sell goods to a public who had not enough money to buy them, they became vaguely disturbed about the immorality of giving goods for nothing. When we pointed out the defects of accountancy, they would wander dreamily into generalisations about the need for a “change of heart.” When driven into a corner they said with asperity that it was absurd to put down the failure of a whole civilisation to a mere error in book-keeping; but *economically considered*, that is exactly where to ascribe it. It is the *bureau* that rules in modern economic life, and it is just there, in the office books, that its error is most clearly written. But we found business men were shakiest of all on pure business, and financiers the haziest in mind as to the nature of credit. As soon as it comes to a discussion of the economic life, considered as a whole, we realise that the modern world, with all its enormous development of industry, is very far from developing a true economic life, self-controlled and conscious of its own nature. Instead, it is throwing up a Plutocracy. Our age is essentially plutocratic. The powers of landlords, politicians, and teachers are all being superseded. A highly developed but quite chaotic life of production is rapidly overwhelming politics and choking the sources of opinion. The nature of Plutocracy is such that those who achieve power in finance acquire direct influence in politics and printing (which last touches the spiritual life). Having captured the State, plutocracy strengthens the idea of the Unity-State, for its aim is to reduce all the three spheres of life to a coalition of confusion in which it may be itself supreme. And plutocracy is

inconsistent with the existence of a free economic life. For while it arises out of the life of production, it only seeks to use that life as an instrument of power.

When the economic life is organised according to its own nature, its credit-power will not be monopolised by an excrescent plutocracy. It will adopt a credit-system designed directly to facilitate the production and distribution of the required goods and services. It will still be possible for ability to acquire power in the economic sphere, but such power will not, of itself, extend beyond it. The relation between employer and employed, which is a relation in right, will be decreed by the Parliament of Rights; for, although an employer must have a certain right of authority over his men, he is not entitled to define that authority exactly as he pleases. The political life, the expression of human equality, will, to a great extent, condition the life of economics. The status of the labourer and the just perquisites of that economic position are clearly questions of human Right. And, though the economic life cannot rest upon equality, being based upon specialisations of skill, it has a natural subservience to the life of Rights, and exists for the good of all its members, to give them a richer life and larger leisure. Its highest and truest ideal is FRATERNITY.

These three ideals, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, are quite unrealisable in any conception of the State as a unity. But each, in its own sphere within the Threefold Commonwealth, can be both an inspiration and a reality. An economic life, enterprising and productive, conditioned by a freely discussed life of Rights, and both of these fertilised and permeated by an autonomous and self-organised life of spiritual activity – that is the social ideal which is suggested by Steiner's *Threefold Commonwealth*. But the book reveals principles far more than it actually suggests plans. If I have given a rather disproportionate space in this short survey to its discussion of the economic sphere, it is because I could not resist the temptation to show the harmony with New Age Economics. But I hope I have not obscured the argument that a renaissance of the spiritual life and a purification of the democratic life of policy are concomitant and inseparable necessities.

Politics are at present a well-developed but unfruitful field. It is by creating an original and active life of the spirit that we can best further the realisation of the Threefold Commonwealth of Man. By that, and by demonstrating the truth of economics and the falsehoods of finance. Between these two activities the moribund life of politics could be forced into a new reality.

For the creation of a free life of the spirit, there is a great need of books such as Steiner's *Threefold Commonwealth*, and of such lectures as the many he delivered in exposition of it. The spirit of this work directly induces a higher vision of human society, a more realistic grasp of its facts. Steiner's method, the best of our time, because most comprehensive, itself points the way towards a united, free spiritual life. For which, however, we need hundreds of workers, training the intelligence to its highest expression in Philosophy, the emotions to their purest clarification in Worship. Only thus will the life of the spirit ever begin to be autonomous. And the life of politics and economics cannot progress a step beyond it. For in this trinity, none is greater nor lesser, none is before nor after.