

The Psychology of the Present Social Unrest

(By Dr. Lyle Telford))

NOTE: Because of the timeliness of the topic and the earnestness of the writer of this article, we have used it with as little alteration as possible. We do not necessarily endorse it.—(Ed. B. C. M.)

There is today a great seething unrest in the minds of the great mass of humanity. It is prevalent in all classes of society. It is abounding in every nation under the sun. It is a source of worry to the statesmen of all countries. On its account it may be truly said, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Our daily press is full of reports of startling events. At one time the reports bear upon occurrences in our own city, or province, or Dominion; at another they refer to events in some far-off clime. Whatever may be the cause of it all, a day seldom passes but we read of something that serves to keep constantly before our minds this great world-wide unrest.

The object of this article is to endeavor to show in a humble way, what might be considered the fundamental principles underlying this great discontent, so that we may the more intelligently deal with the cause.

The two primitive instincts of every living thing are, first, Self-Preservation; second, Race Preservation. That these instincts may be modified or even completely controlled is admitted. A man may so disregard the instinct of self-preservation that he may give up his life for his loved ones, his home, his country or for any principle that he may deem worthy of such a sacrifice. We unhesitatingly declare that such a sacrifice is the most conclusive proof of an honest and sincere attitude on the part of that individual, no matter whether or not we agree with the principle. "Greater Love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." So, though we may have gained complete control over this primitive instinct, we, nevertheless recognize in it one of the greatest forces in all our human experiences.

Of the second primitive instinct, that of Race Preservation, it may be truly said that we have in it a force and an influence upon our lives, second only to the influence of the instinct of self-preservation. For instance, a father will suffer untold agony, and even death itself, to save his child; to keep body and soul together.

a mother will work until the bones of her fingers are bare, so that her child may have enough of the necessities of life

These two instincts are often so intimately interwoven that it may be very hard to say just where the influence of the one begins, and that of the other leaves off. This second primitive instinct, that of race preservation, bears to society as a whole the same relationship that the first primitive instinct, that of self-preservation, does to each individual unit of society. It is only to be expected, then, that anything that prevents the fulfilling of that instinct on the part of society as a whole, will have an effect upon that society rather similar to the effects produced upon its individual units.

Granted that all this is so, we may ask, How are these instincts aroused in our modern society? Anything that in any way interferes with our being able to obtain the necessities of life will serve to arouse them. Anything that prevents our getting the necessary food to supply our bodily needs tends to arouse a spirit of antagonism on our part towards what we consider the obstacle in our way. That obstacle may be a person or persons, corporations or our own government, or the arrangement of our present social order as we find it today. Anything, too, that in any way interferes with our obtaining clothing and shelter sufficient for our needs—or what we consider our needs—also serves as an arousing factor.

The mildest and tamest of our domestic animals will put up the most ferocious struggle if you attempt to take from them, or even prevent their access to, the necessities of life.

Such an action on your part arouses within them the spirit of pugnacity which is present in all forms of animal life, human life included. The struggle so commenced may be the result from two apparently different sources, namely, that of offense and that of defense, yet both are the outcome of the instinct of self-preservation.

What I have said regarding the individual unit of society, man, is true of society as a whole. Anything that prevents society from obtaining the things necessary—or that it considers necessary—for the sustaining of its life, will arouse the spirit of pugnacity, with all the results so common to such a spirit. The one big result that still remains fresh in our memory, is that of the last great war. All the nations engaged in that gigantic struggle thought, at least, that they were engaged in a fight for their life, that their very existence depended on victory.

No one will dispute the fact that our great social unrest is due to the struggle for existence and varies in degree and intensity in relation thereto. In other words, our unrest is due to anything that in any way tends to hinder our unconscious endeavor to fulfil our primitive instincts.

What is there, then, about our present social order that in any way tends to obstruct the necessary fulfilment of these instincts? First and foremost, I would mention the present method of ownership of the means of production and distribution. Other causes include: Our present form of so-called representative government; the many and varied avenues through which our knowledge is derived, especially in connection with the daily press of our land; the pulpit and the movies.

Down through the ages there has gradually evolved a system of specialization within our social order. For us to specialize in any particular line of endeavor, which did not in itself actually produce the necessities of life, compelled us to make some working arrangement with our fellows, so that in return for our labor on their behalf we might receive from them the material which would enable us to continue our work in our chosen field. To carry out this co-operation on a large scale as we have it today, necessitated the formation of a medium of exchange. This medium of exchange is something I am willing to accept from someone else in return for my labors, something I know will be acceptable to others who are



"HE'S AN EXPERT ON SOME LINES, BUT HERE'S ONE BOOK HE NEEDS TO STUDY!"