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# SOCIAL *Question*

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To lighten the darkness of society and abate the present class warfare by uniting the conscientious and intelligent of all the classes in the earnest **REVOLT** against the bondage of social superstitions and barbarisms.

**J. A. ANDREWS,**  
491 ELIZABETH STREET, SYDNEY,  
Late a Prisoner in Bileela Gaol for Sedition;  
Author, Printer, and Publisher of this Work.

# THE SOCIAL QUESTION.

BY J. A. ANDREWS.

The present acute depression is instructive. It is not only the workers who are suffering, but hundreds of capitalists, whose livelihood is derived from wholesale or retail trade, from the profits of employes' labor on contracts or in factories, or even from rents, have been selling the very carpets from off their floors to try and keep their businesses from ruin, or even to raise the **Hard Cash** which has become absolutely essential in order to buy food.

The reason of this is that the capitalist takes up his income in the form of a commission on the consumption effected by the workers, or by other capitalists whose purchasing power comes as a commission on the workers' consumption. Consequently, when the purchasing power of the workers is reduced, the fount of capitalist income is shut off at its source.

Yet it is to the immediate interest of every employer of labor to reduce the purchasing power of the workers immediately under him, by either cutting down their wages, or what amounts to the same thing, causing them to yield such large results from their toil, that the production goes considerably ahead of the consumption, when he will dispense with their services while waiting to sell the surplus.

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This plain fact ought to show to capitalists and workers alike that there is something wrong in the very basis of existing society, and more especially in that section of it known as property, or the system regulating the use and possession of things.

It is also sufficiently evident without further demonstration, that the more a man owns, the more he owns you, be you workman, shopkeeper, merchant, employer, landlord, or official. To the latter at least, it will be equally evident that the higher a man's rank, that is, the greater the amount of authority vested in him, the more he owns you, be you his official subordinate or an outsider. And if we examine the property system, we find that it is simply one of authority, and that what a man owns means what he is invested with authority to prevent other people from enjoying. Or, in other words, a man's rank or property is the measure of the forbiddenness of other people, that is to say, again, their slavery.

Now the ostensible object of property is, to secure to each individual the undisturbed enjoyment of the things he has provided or placed himself in access to for the satisfaction of his purposes—the motive is kindly, but in practice other considerations may sometimes be morally weightier, hence it is folly to make it absolute in practice, and create a vested interest in any wrongs that can arise out of a more rigid than national application—and law was intended as the medium of a similar protection to the indi-

vidual in other respects. But these objects have been defeated by the very means adopted to attain them; which have made the moral standard for use and possession no longer rational consideration for the purposes and needs of others, but the holding a monopoly of land, objects, etc.; and which have similarly made the standard of conduct in general, no longer a rational consideration for others, but conformity with the letter of some command or prohibition. This is a false morality, and, like all falsehood, entails suffering when built upon in practice.

One consequence has been a tendency for these very privileges to concentrate in the hands of the least sympathetic and most unscrupulous; this tendency is further obvious from the fact, that under no conceivable form of society are wrongs and hardships impossible, and when, instead of people being left free to vary their conduct according to the emergency, usages are crystallised into a compulsory system, the abuses become vested interests. The moral sense is depraved, both by the false standard set up, and by the necessities of the struggle thus created for the possession of abuses to secure life and comfort. Another and a very obvious result is that, according to the Government Statistician of New South Wales, while practically every male from the age of puberty pertains to some income-getting occupation, the average income they each realise is less than one tenth of one average worker's production in the same time. And as some of these incomes are counted twice,

viz., wages spent in ground rent are, obviously, really not income to the wage earner at all, since they represent no products consumed by him, yet are counted both to him and to the landlord as if the money had measured an exchange instead of a one-sided transfer of products, and so in other cases of mere tribute-levying—even this calculation is very far from giving an adequate idea of the tremendous waste of wealth, and the consequent all-round privation, imposed by the present "social" system.

The ordinary capitalist is lucky if he gets as much as one average producer creates. And the poverty and degradation around him prevent his enjoying the full benefit of what he acquires at so much more cost of energy and anxiety than is requisite for its production. He needs £10,000 a year to procure the gratifications that wealth measurable by £1000 would place within his reach were all around on an equal footing; for he has to pay hirelings for the cooperation that would in the other case be freely available from congenial and co-interested comrades.

And again, we can realise that we have before us the outcome of a vicious principle, when we see the so-called "Sovereign People" grovelling in the dust beseeching—in vain—their alleged servants for some trifling boon, some concession to mercy or to justice; when we see men hanged in supreme contempt of public opinion merely for knocking down a couple of policemen in order to escape arrest, while policemen deliberately

shoot men dead with impunity, and the public look on like slaves afraid to lift a hand against the perpetration of the detested crimes committed, with an infinitude of sarcasm, in their name ! It can be no question of "good" or "bad" Governments, but only one of radical principle, when we find the People deeming it their duty to acquiesce meekly in every outrage upon their ideas, and thinking that they have no right but to passively concur in the effectuation of atrocities at which they shudder with horror !

These reflections inevitably entail the conviction that the present relations of society must be discarded ; and if the idea of freedom and justice inspires us, and not that of raising bulwarks of jealousy and rule against our fellows, concern for each others' needs and purposes must take place of imagined divine rights to particular things and inscrutable attributes of right or wrong investing the externals of actions. And realising also how literally and materially, and not as a mere pretty sentiment, the interest of each is that of all, we cannot but repose entire confidence in Humanity whenever it will look within itself for motive and guidance, instead of to dead men's dictates resuscitated for reverence, and living men liveried and armoured in cast-off rights of their fellow-people.

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**— READ THE PROSECUTED BOOK. (3d.)  
A HANDBOOK OF ANARCHY**

By J. A. Andrews, 491 Elizabeth-st., Sydney,  
Late a Prisoner in Biloela Gaol for Sedition ;  
Author, Printer, and Publisher of this Work.