

Progressive Utilization

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By its very name Prout (PROgressive Utilization Theory) reveals the spirit of its motivation: utilization. To use things, use people's potentialities, to get everyone, everything and everywhere into the action. To do this requires spreading and sharing human endeavours and needs over as many diverse resources, on as many shoulders, and over as wide an area as possible. Also, to attend to our requirements so they fall evenly and fairly over the whole globe like an indiscriminating blanket. And, to take the same approach from beneath – so that at the basic level everyone has their minimum necessities of life met, to get them into as many pockets as possible, and provide jobs so that people have purchasing capacity to acquire their needs. Importantly, also to provide incentives so more people can activate their special potentialities, creatively, innovatively, intellectually; so that in turn they will stimulate production, jobs and wealth.

Prout means purposeful economic decentralization aimed at creating economic and social activation where none existed before (in other words, greater or 'maximum' utilization). This requires broadening and maintaining a wider and wider basis for economic and social change and interaction, i.e. bringing more people, more land and a greater variety of resources together into the exchange process.

Though it appears that the earth is capable of sustaining neither human needs nor the impact of human economic activity, the source of the immediate problem is not shortage of resources but their misutilization. A narrow range of resources are badly overused and misused while potentially vast alternatives are barely touched. If the same needs were to be spread out over a larger range of resources, they would be sustained more successfully for a longer period of time. If a heavy stone is placed in the middle of a table the table will break. Yet if the same weight is distributed evenly over the whole surface the weight can be borne easily. This is the essence of Prout – an expanding circle of resources is used at a proportionate, or even contracting, rate of speed (per resource) benefiting an increasing number of people. These people in turn activate their potentials and contribute themselves and the unique resources of their lands and other resources, and human minds and inner potentials, as further new resources. This is *progressive utilization*.

Under capitalism just the reverse occurs. Governed by costs, the compulsion to grow, and life and death competition (not to mention his/her own greed) the capitalist can choose only resources, and employ only those production techniques, which will give them a market edge on their opponents. The need for bigger factories, smaller labour and raw materials costs, force capitalists to centralize production, centralize control and use of labour, and select only the largest sources of easily available raw materials. To think in any other way would open them to the attack of competitors.

Consequently, capitalism can only choose from a narrow range of resources which meet their special criteria. Naturally these overstressed resources will vanish at an alarming rate and upset the delicate balance of nature and social relationships. Thus over-centralized capitalist economies display the pattern of decay: a contracting circle of resources being used at an expanding rate of speed and damage to the environment for the benefit of a decreasing number of people (the winners of the struggle).

An example is food production. The figures speak for themselves:

- 1 acre of land, if used for vegetables, grains and/or legumes, e.g. soy beans, can produce 10-15 times more protein than if devoted to meat production¹;
- over 30% of all usable total land mass on Earth is used by livestock², and it takes 5,000 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of meat³, while it only takes 10-20 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of vegetables, fruits, grains or soybeans⁴;
- childhood malnutrition is a cause of death for more than 2.5 million children every year⁵, and 842 million people (or 1 in 8) were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2013⁶;
- 1 calorie of animal protein requires more than 10 times as much fossil fuel input and produces more than 10 times as much CO₂ as does 1 calorie of plant protein⁷.

Thus, animal agriculture is a misutilization of resources. The progressive utilization of the same resources when applied to plant agriculture can easily feed everyone in the world.

So there is another way, and the economic enterprises needed to achieve better and progressive utilization of resources and potentialities to benefit all, is that of cooperatives. Coordinated cooperation, rather than subordination under capitalism, is needed for the welfare and all-round happiness of everyone – what is required is economic democracy. This will bring collective welfare.

Without considering the collective welfare, capitalists choose from a narrow range of resources and options, and forget all the flow on effects they create, all the negative externalities (costs/impacts arising from an activity which does not accrue to the person carrying on the activity), where the cost or impact is borne by the people generally and paid for via taxes and other imposts on the people. Part of the crisis on overstressed resources is due to capitalism's narrow vision.

An example is obesity. There are huge social costs that arise (negative externalities), because:

- the corporate objectives of junk and fast-food outlets is to make profits, with no concern about the other impacts of their products;
- diet is a major contributor to health decline;
- people are not caring for their health, and so are becoming more obese and disease-prone;
- people have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, signs of heart disease, advanced fibrous plaques in their arteries;
- for these diseases they seek medical care and there are costs involved on the public health care system and also other public impacts;
- not eating junk foods, not eating meat, not eating fatty foods could prevent huge public medical costs which people pay for;
- with a change of habits these diseases and costs would not arise and so not impose costs on the people generally, such as through the public health care system.

The problems caused by capitalism arise because of its centralizing and hoarding tendencies, which have a long term contractive effect, i.e. they de-activate the productive effect of utilization of people's potential, the places in which they live, the resources of that place, and of wealth creation – the result is stagnancy. In other words, there is gross misutilization. Animal agriculture and junk-foods are good examples of inefficient use of resources and the negative impacts that arise.

To cure these maladies Prout's economic program promotes economic decentralization, in which people have a real say in their economy. It is economic democracy that will produce long term expansive effects and full, balanced and sensible utilization of our planet's many resources, i.e. *maximum utilization*.

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¹ *Soy Benefits*, National Soybean Research Laboratory, viewed 1 March 2014, <http://www.nsrll.uiuc.edu/soy_benefits.html>.

² Steinfeld, H, Gerber, P, Wassenaar, T, Castel, V, Rosales, M, & de Haan C 2006, *Livestock's Long Shadow – Environmental issues and options*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 29 November 2006 (Livestock's Long Shadow), viewed 1 March 2014, <<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM>; <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/a0701e/a0701e.pdf>>.

³ Pimentel, D & Pimental, M 2003, 'Sustainability of meat-based and plant-based diets and the environment', *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, vol. 78 (suppl), 660S-663S, September 2003, viewed 1 March 2014, <<http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/78/3/660S.full>>.

⁴ 'Sustainability of meat-based and plant-based diets and the environment'.

⁵ *Globally almost 870 million chronically undernourished - new hunger report*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, viewed 1 March 2014, <<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/161819/icode/>>.

⁶ FAO, IFAD & WFP 2013, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World – The multiple dimensions of food security*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome (Food Insecurity in the World), viewed 1 March 2014, <<http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/>>.

⁷ Livestock's Long Shadow.