

Ways and Means

Xenophon



WAYS AND MEANS

For my part I have always held that the constitution of a state reflects the character of the leading politicians. But some of the leading men at Athens have stated that they recognize justice as clearly as other men; "but," they have said, "owing to the poverty of the masses, we are forced to be somewhat unjust in our treatment of the cities." This set me thinking whether by any means the citizens might obtain food entirely from their own soil, which would certainly be the fairest way. I felt that, were this so, they would be relieved of their poverty, and also of the suspicion with which they are regarded by the Greek world.

Now as I thought over my ideas, one thing seemed clear at once, that the country is by its nature capable of furnishing an ample revenue. To drive home the truth of this statement I will first describe the natural properties of Attica.

The extreme mildness of the seasons here is shown by the actual products. At any rate, plants that will not even grow in many countries bear fruit here. Not less productive than the land is the sea around the coasts. Notice too that the good things which the gods send in their season all come in earlier here and go out later than elsewhere.

And the pre-eminence of the land is not only in the things that bloom and wither annually: she has other good things that last for ever. Nature has put in her abundance of stone, from which are fashioned lovely temples and lovely altars, and goodly statues for the gods. Many Greeks and barbarians alike have need of it.

Again, there is land that yields no fruit if sown, and yet, when quarried, feeds many times the number it could support if it grew corn. And recollect, there is silver in the soil, the gift, beyond doubt, of divine providence: at any rate, many as are the states near to her by land and sea, into none of them does even a thin vein of silver ore extend.

One might reasonably suppose that the city lies at the centre of Greece, nay of the whole inhabited world. For the further we go from her, the more intense is the heat or cold we meet with; and every traveller who would cross

from one to the other end of Greece passes Athens as the centre of a circle, whether he goes by water or by road.

Then, too, though she is not wholly sea-girt, all the winds of heaven bring to her the goods she needs and bear away her exports, as if she were an island; for she lies between two seas: and she has a vast land trade as well; for she is of the mainland.

Further, on the borders of most states dwell barbarians who trouble them: but the neighbouring states of Athens are themselves remote from the barbarians.

All these advantages, as I have said, are, I believe, due to the country itself. But instead of limiting ourselves to the blessings that may be called indigenous, suppose that, in the first place, we studied the interests of the resident aliens. For in them we have one of the very best sources of revenue, in my opinion, inasmuch as they are self-supporting and, so far from receiving payment for the many services they render to states, they contribute by paying a special tax.

I think that we should study their interests sufficiently, if we relieved them of the duties that seem to impose a certain measure of disability on the resident alien without conferring any benefit on the state, and also of the obligation to serve in the infantry along with the citizens. Apart from the personal risk, it is no small thing to leave their trades and their private affairs.

The state itself too would gain if the citizens served in the ranks together, and no longer found themselves in the same company with Lydians, Phrygians, Syrians, and barbarians of all sorts, of whom a large part of our alien population consists.

In addition to the advantage of dispensing with the services of these men, it would be an ornament to the state that the Athenians should be thought to rely on themselves rather than on the help of foreigners in fighting their battles.

If, moreover, we granted the resident aliens the right to serve in the cavalry and various other privileges which it is proper to grant them, I think that we should find their loyalty increase and at the same time should add to the strength and greatness of the state.

Then again, since there are many vacant sites for houses within the walls, if the state allowed approved applicants to erect houses on these and granted them the freehold of the land, I think that we should find a larger and better class of persons desiring to live at Athens.

And if we appointed a board of Guardians of Aliens analogous to the Guardians of Orphans, and some kind of distinction were earmarked for guardians whose list of resident aliens was longest, that too would add to the loyalty of the aliens, and probably all without a city would covet the right of settling in Athens, and would increase our revenues.

I shall now say something of the unrivalled amenities and advantages of our city as a commercial centre. In the first place, I presume, she possesses the finest and safest accomodation for shipping, since vessels can anchor here and ride safe at their moorings in spite of bad weather.

Moreover, at most other ports merchants are compelled to ship a return cargo, because the local currency has no circulation in other states; but at Athens they have the opportunity of exchanging their cargo and exporting very many classes of goods that are in demand, or, if they do not want to ship a return cargo of goods, it is sound business to export silver; for, wherever they sell it, they are sure to make a profit on the capital invested.

If prizes were offered to the magistrates of the market for just and prompt settlement of disputes, so that sailings were not delayed, the effect would be that a far larger number of merchants would trade with us and with much greater satisfaction.

It would also be an excellent plan to reserve front seats in the theatre for merchants and shipowners, and to offer them hospitality occasionally, when the high quality of their ships and merchandise entitles them to be considered benefactors of the state. With the prospect of these honours before them they would look on us as friends and hasten to visit us to win the honour as well as the profit.

The rise in the number of residents and visitors would of course lead to a corresponding expansion of our imports and exports, of sales, rents and customs.

Now such additions to our revenues as these need cost us nothing whatever beyond benevolent legislation and measures of control. Other

methods of raising revenue that I have in mind will require capital, no doubt.

Nevertheless I venture to hope that the citizens would contribute eagerly towards such objects, when I recall the large sums contributed by the state when Lysistratus was in command and troops were sent to aid the Arcadians, and again in the time of Hegesileos.

I am also aware that large expenditure is frequently incurred to send warships abroad, though none can tell whether the venture will be for better or worse, and the only thing certain is that the subscribers will never see their money back nor even enjoy any part of what they contribute.

But no investment can yield them so fine a return as the money advanced by them to form the capital fund. For every subscriber of ten minae, drawing three obols a day, gets nearly twenty per cent. — as much as he would get on bottomry; and every subscriber of five minae gets more than a third of his capital back in interest.

But most of the Athenians will get over a hundred per cent. in a year, for those who advance one mina will draw an income of nearly two minae, guaranteed by the state, which is to all appearances the safest and most durable of human institutions.

I think, too, that if their names were to be recorded in the roll of benefactors for all time, many foreigners also would subscribe, and a certain number of states would be attracted by the prospect of enrolment. I believe that even kings and despots and oriental governors would desire to share in this reward.

When funds were sufficient, it would be a fine plan to build more lodging-houses for shipowners near the harbours, and convenient places of exchange for merchants, also hotels to accomodate visitors.

Again, if houses and shops were put up both in the Peiraeus and in the city for retail traders, they would be an ornament to the state, and at the same time the source of a considerable revenue.

Moreover, I think it would be a good plan to take a hint from the state ownership of public warships, and to see whether it be possible to acquire a fleet of public merchant vessels and to lease them under securities, like our other public property. For if this proved to be practicable, these vessels would

yield another large revenue.

As for the silver mines, I believe that if a proper system of working were introduced, a vast amount of money would be obtained from them apart from our other sources of revenue. I want to point out the possibilities of these mines to those who do not know. For, once you realize their possibilities, you will be in a better position to consider how the mines should be managed.

Now, we all agree that the mines have been worked for many generations. At any rate, no one even attempts to date the beginning of mining operations. And yet, although digging and the removal of the silver ore have been carried on for so long a time, note how small is the size of the dumps compared with the virgin and silver-laden hills.

And it is continually being found that, so far from shrinking, the silver-yielding area extends further and further. Well, so long as the maximum number of workmen was employed in them, no one ever wanted a job; in fact, there were always more jobs than the labourers could deal with.

And even at the present day no owner of slaves employed in the mines reduces the number of his men; on the contrary, every master obtains as many more as he can. The fact is, I imagine, that when there are few diggers and searchers, the amount of metal recovered is small, and when there are many, the total of ore discovered is multiplied. Hence of all the industries with which I am acquainted this is the only one in which expansion of business excites no jealousy.

Further than this, every farmer can tell just how many yoke of oxen are enough for the farm and how many labourers. To put more on the land than the requisite number is counted loss. In mining undertakings, on the contrary, everyone tells you that he is short of labour.

Mining, in fact, is quite different from other industries. An increase in the number of coppersmiths, for example, produces a fall in the price of copper work, and the coppersmiths retire from business. The same thing happens in the iron trade. Again, when corn and wine are abundant, the crops are cheap, and the profit derived from growing them disappears, so that many give up farming and set up as merchants or shopkeepers or moneylenders. But an increase in the amount of the silver ore discovered and of the metal won is accompanied by an increase in the number of persons who take up this

industry.

Neither is silver like furniture, of which a man never buys more when once he has got enough for his house. No one ever yet possessed so much silver as to want no more; if a man finds himself with a huge amount of it, he takes as much pleasure in burying the surplus as in using it.

Mark too that, whenever states are prosperous, silver is in strong demand. The men will spend money on fine arms and good horses and magnificent houses and establishments, and the women go in for expensive clothes and gold jewelry.

If, on the other hand, the body politic is diseased owing to failure of the harvest or to war, the land goes out of cultivation and there is a much more insistent demand for cash to pay for food and mercenaries.

If anyone says that gold is quite as useful as silver, I am not going to contradict him; but I know this, that when gold is plentiful, silver rises and gold falls in value.

With these facts before us, we need not hesitate to bring as much labour as we can get into the mines and carry on work in them, feeling confident that the ore will never give out and that silver will never lose its value.

I think, indeed, that the state has anticipated me in this discovery; at any rate she throws open the mining industry to foreigners on the same terms as are granted to citizens.

To make myself clearer on the subject of alimony, I will now explain how the mines may be worked with the greatest advantage to the state. Not that I expect to surprise you by what I am going to say, as if I had found the solution of a difficult problem. For some things that I shall mention are still to be seen by anyone at the present day, and as for conditions in the past, our fathers have told us that they were similar.

But what may well excite surprise is that the state, being aware that many private individuals are making money out of her, does not imitate them. Those of us who have given thought to the matter have heard long ago, I imagine, that Nicias son of Niceratus, once owned a thousand men in the mines, and let them out to Socias the Thracian, on condition that Sosias paid him an obol a day per man net and filled all vacancies as they occurred.

Hipponicus, again, had six hundred slaves let out on the same terms and received a rent of a mina a day net. Philemonides had three hundred, and received half a mina. There were others too, owning numbers in proportion, I presume, to their capital.

But why dwell on the past? At this day there are many men in the mines let out in this way.

Were my proposals adopted, the only innovation would be, that just as private individuals have built up a permanent income by becoming slave owners, so the state would become possessed of public slaves, until there were three for every citizen.

Whether my plan is workable, let anyone who chooses judge for himself by examining it in detail. So let us take first the cost of the men. Clearly the treasury is in a better position to provide the money than private individuals. Moreover the Council can easily issue a notice inviting all and sundry to bring slaves, and can buy those that are brought to it.

When once they are purchased, why should there be more hesitation about hiring from the treasury than from a private person, the terms offered being the same? At any rate men hire consecrated lands and houses, and farm taxes under the state.

The treasury can insure the slaves purchased by requiring some of the lessees to become guarantors, as it does in the case of the tax-farmers. In fact a tax-farmer can swindle the state more easily than a lessee of slaves.

For how are you to detect the export of public money? Money looks the same whether it is private property or belongs to the state. But how is a man to steal slaves when they are branded with the public mark and it is a penal offence to sell or export them? So far, then, it appears to be possible for the state to acquire and to keep men.

But, one may ask, when labour is abundant, how will a sufficient number of persons be found to hire it? Well, if anyone feels doubtful about that, let him comfort himself with the thought that many men in the business will hire the state slaves as additional hands, since they have abundance of capital, and that among those now working in the mines many are growing old. Moreover there are many others, both Athenians and foreigners, who have neither will nor strength to work with their own hands, but would be glad to make a

living by becoming managers.

Assume, however, that the total number of slaves to begin with is twelve hundred. By using the revenue derived from these the number might in all probability be raised to six thousand at the least in the course of five or six years. Further, if each man brings in a clear obol a day, the annual revenue derived from that number of men is sixty talents.

Out of this sum, if twenty talents are invested in additional slaves, the state will have forty talents available for any other necessary purpose. And when a total of ten thousand men is reached, the revenue will be a hundred talents.

But the state will receive far more than that, as anyone will testify who is old enough to remember how much the charge for slave labour brought in before the trouble at Decelea. And there is another proof. During the history of the mines an infinite number of men has worked in them; and yet the condition of the mines to-day is exactly the same as it was in the time of our ancestors, and their memory ran not to the contrary.

And present conditions all lead to the conclusion that the number of slaves employed there can never be greater than the works need. For the miners find no limit to shaft or gallery.

And, mark you, it is as possible now to open new veins as in former times. Nor can one say with any certainty whether the ore is more plentiful in the area already under work or in the unexplored tracts.

Then why, it may be asked, are fewer new cuttings made nowadays than formerly? Simply because those interested in the mines are poorer. For operations have only lately been resumed, and a man who makes a new cutting incurs a serious risk. If he strikes good stuff he makes a fortune; but if he is

disappointed, he loses the money he has spent. Therefore people nowadays are very chary of taking such a risk.

However, I think I can meet this difficulty too, and suggest a plan that will make the opening of new cuttings a perfectly safe undertaking. The Athenians, of course, are divided into ten tribes. Now assume that the state were to offer each tribe an equal number of slaves, and that when new cuttings were made, the tribes were to pool their luck.

The result would be that if one tribe found silver, the discovery would be profitable to all; and if two, three, four, or half the tribes found, the profits from these works would obviously be greater. Nothing that has happened in the past makes it probable that all would fail to find.

Of course, private individuals also are able to combine on this principle and pool their fortunes in order to diminish the risk. Nevertheless there is no reason to fear that a public company formed on this plan will conflict with the interests of private persons, or be hampered by them. No, just as every new adhesion to a confederacy brings an increase of strength to all its members, so the greater the number of persons operating in the mines, the more treasure they will discover and unearth.

I have now explained what regulations I think should be introduced into the state in order that every Athenian may receive sufficient maintenance at the public expense.

Some may imagine that enough money would never be subscribed to provide the huge amount of capital necessary, according to their calculations, to finance all these schemes. But even so they need not despair.

For it is not essential that the plan should be carried out in all its details in order that any advantage may come of it. No, whatever the number of houses built, or of ships constructed, or of slaves purchased, they will immediately prove a paying concern.

In fact in one respect it will be even more profitable to proceed gradually than to do everything at once. For if everybody begins building, we shall pay more for worse work than if we carry out the undertaking gradually; and if we try to find an enormous number of slaves, we shall be forced to buy inferior men at a high price.

By proceeding as our means allow, we can repeat whatever is well conceived and avoid the repetition of mistakes.

Besides, were the whole scheme put in hand at once, we should have to find the whole of the money; but if some parts were proceeded with and others postponed, the income realised would help to provide the amount still required.

Possibly the gravest fear in everyone's mind is that the works may become overcrowded if the state acquires too many slaves. But we can rid ourselves of that fear by not putting more men in year by year than the works themselves require.

Accordingly I hold that this, which is the easiest way, is also the best way of doing these things. On the other hand, if you think that the burdens imposed during the late war make it impossible for you to contribute anything at all — well, keep down the cost of administration during the next year to the amount that the taxes yielded before the peace; and invest the balances over and above that amount, which you will get with peace, with considerate treatment of resident aliens and merchants, with the growth of imports and exports due to concentration of a larger population, and with the expansion of harbour and market dues, so that the investment will bring in the largest revenue.

Or again, if any fear that this scheme would prove worthless in the event of war breaking out, they should observe that, with this system at work, war becomes far more formidable to the aggressors than to the city.

For what instrument is more serviceable for war than men? We should have enough of them to supply crews to many ships of the state; and many men available for service in the ranks as infantry could press the enemy hard, if they were treated with consideration.

But I reckon that, even in the event of war, the mines need not be abandoned. There are, of course, two fortresses in the mining district, one at Anaphlystus on the south side, the other at Thoricus on the north. The distance between them is about seven miles and a half.

Now suppose that we had a third stronghold between them on the highest point of Besa. The works would then be linked up by all the fortresses, and at the first intimation of a hostile movement, every man would have but a short distance to go in order to reach safety.

In case an enemy came in force, he would, no doubt, seize any corn or wine or cattle that he found outside; but the silver ore, when he had got it, would be of as much use to him as a heap of stones.

And how could an enemy ever go for the mines? The distance between Megara, the nearest city, and the silver mines, is of course much more than five

hundred furlongs; and Thebes, which is next in proximity, lies at a distance of much more than six hundred furlongs from them.

Let us assume, then, that an enemy is marching on the mines from some such point. He is bound to pass Athens; and if his numbers are small, he is likely to be destroyed by our cavalry and patrols. On the other hand, to march on them with a large force, leaving his own property unprotected, is no easy matter; for when he arrived at the mines the city of Athens would be much nearer to his own states than he himself would be.

But even supposing that he should come, how is he to stay without supplies? And to send part of their forces in search of food may mean destruction to the foraging party and failure to achieve the ends for which he is contending; or if the whole force is continually foraging it will find itself blockaded instead of blockading.

However, the rent derived from the slaves would not be the only source of relief to the community. With the concentration of a large population in the mining district, abundant revenue would be derived from the local market, from state-owned houses near the silver mines, from furnaces and all the other sources.

For a densely populated city would grow up there, if it were organised on this plan; yes, and building sites would become as valuable there as they are in our suburbs.

If the plans that I have put forward are carried out, I agree that, apart from the improvement in our financial position, we shall become a people more obedient, better disciplined, and more efficient in war.

For the classes undergoing physical training will take more pains in the gymnasium when they receive their maintenance in full than they take under the superintendents of the torch races; and the classes on garrison duty in a fortress, or serving as targeteers, or patrolling the country will show greater alacrity in carrying out all these duties when the maintenance is duly supplied for the work done.

If it seems clear that the state cannot obtain a full revenue from all sources unless she has peace, is it not worth while to set up a board of guardians of peace? Were such a board constituted, it would help to increase the popularity of the city and to make it more attractive and more densely thronged with

visitors from all parts.

If any are inclined to think that a lasting peace for our city will involve a loss of her power and glory and fame in Greece, they too, in my opinion, are out in their calculations. For I presume that those states are reckoned the happiest that enjoy the longest period of unbroken peace; and of all states Athens is by nature most suited to flourish in peace.

For if the state is tranquil, what class of men will not need her? Shipowners and merchants will head the list. Then there will be those rich in corn and wine and oil and cattle; men possessed of brains and money to invest; craftsmen and professors and

philosophers; poets and the people who make use of their works; those to whom anything sacred or secular appeals that is worth seeing or hearing. Besides, where will those who want to buy or sell many things quickly meet with better success in their efforts than at Athens?

No one, I dare say, contests this; but there are some who wish the state to recover her ascendancy, and they may think that it is more likely to be won by war than by peace. Let such, in the first place, call to mind the Persian Wars. Was it by coercing the Greeks or by rendering services to them that we became leaders of the fleet and treasurers of the league funds?

Further, after the state had been stripped of her empire through seeming to exercise her authority with excessive harshness, did not the islanders even then restore to us the presidency of the fleet by their own free will, when we refrained from acts of injustice?

And again, did not the Thebans place themselves under the leadership of the Athenians in return for our good offices? Yet once again, it was not the effect of coercion on our part, but of generous treatment, that the Lacedaemonians permitted the Athenians to arrange the leadership as they chose.

And now, owing to the confusion prevalent in Greece, an opportunity, I think, has fallen to the state to win back the Greeks without trouble, without danger, and without expense. For she has it in her power to try to reconcile the warring states, she has it in her power to compose the factions contending in their midst.

And were it apparent that you are striving to make the Delphic shrine independent, as it used to be, not by joining in war, but by sending embassies up and down Greece, I for my part should not be in the least surprised if you found the Greeks all of one mind, banded together by oath and united in alliance against any that attempted to seize the shrine in the event of the Phocians abandoning it.

Were you to show also that you are striving for peace in every land and on every sea, I do think that, next to the safety of their own country, all men would put the safety of Athens first in their prayers.

If, on the other hand, any one supposes that financially war is more profitable to the state than peace, I really do not know how the truth of this can be tested better than by considering once more what has been the experience of our state in the past.

He will find that in old days a very great amount of money was paid into the treasury in time of peace, and that the whole of it was spent in time of war; he will conclude on consideration that in our own time the effect of the late war on our revenues was that many of them ceased, while those that came in were exhausted by the multitude of expenses; whereas the cessation of war by sea has been followed by a rise in the revenues, and has allowed the citizens to devote them to any purpose they choose.

But some one may ask me, Do you mean to say that, even if she is wronged, the state should remain at peace with the offender? No, certainly not; but I do say that our vengeance would follow far more swiftly on our enemies if we provoked nobody by wrong-doing; for then they would look in vain for an ally.

Well now, surely, if none of these proposals is impossible or even difficult, if by carrying them into effect we shall be regarded with more affection by the Greeks, shall live in greater security, and be more glorious; if the people will be maintained in comfort and the rich no more burdened with the expenses of war; if with a large surplus in hand we shall celebrate our festivals with even more splendour than at present, shall restore the temples, and repair the walls and docks, and shall give back to priests, councillors, magistrates, knights their ancient privileges; surely, I say, our proper course is to proceed with this scheme forthwith, that already in our generation we may come to see our city

secure and prosperous.

Furthermore, if you decide to go forward with the plan, I should advise you to send to Dodona and Delphi, and inquire of the gods whether such a design is fraught with weal for the state both now and in days to come.

And should they consent to it, then I would say that we ought to ask them further, which of the gods we must propitiate in order that we may prosper in our handiwork. Then, when we have offered an acceptable sacrifice to the gods named in their reply, it behoves us to begin the work. For with heaven to help us in what we do, it is likely that our undertakings will go forward continually to the greater weal of the state.