

long, legal index-fingers to put on the spot our hicks out in the sticks). There is nothing so simple as puzzles once the light dawns, and inasmuch as tax lists always have ranked first we wonder why our savants of eighteen dynasties couldn't guess the subject matter long ago.

If mankind would but always keep taxation in mind, how long could any mystery remain a mystery? The mystery of poverty in the midst of plenty—the mystery of depressions in the midst of genius and untold natural resources—the mystery of millions of idle men in the midst of millions of idle acres?

When the subject-matter of a document is unknown, what else can it be but taxes?

### LABORS IN VAIN

It is a far cry from Cleon and his civic notions down to this year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and forty. Cleon was a man with ideas, 429 B. C. He had aspirations somewhat comparable to those of a present-day alderman; that is to say, his notions were about as fitful and as fantastic when it came to pumping the bilge on the Ship of State. Cleon believed that if the poor had no bread to eat—well, let 'em eat cake, and to provide the cake Cleon whooped up the wage scale.

Two thousand four hundred years have cluttered the calendar since Cleon's notions proved to be not so hot, and in the interim an assortment of other notables have followed in his footsteps down the sands of Time, all of whom have aimed to brighten up the short and simple annals of the poor.

About 140 B. C. Polybius felt the urge to take his pen in hand and call the bluff of his political representatives who loosely used the words "freedom and democracy" whilst getting ready for the subsequent mob-rule. Then along came Diocletian, about 240 years after Polybius had cried "What's the use!", and he, the aforesaid Diocletian, took to monkeying with the gold content in the standard coin. Nothing startling occurred, however, except the customary "flop" in the program.

By the time the year 370 A. D. had rolled around the levying of taxes ranked as indoor sport No. 1 and, at this time it is alleged, there were as many tax collectors as tax payers which established a fifty-fifty basis in the art of getting and confiscating the coin of the realm. Things came to such a pretty pass that by 700 A. D. Herodotus was seized with the same urge that overcame Polybius, and the old "Hero" wrote a snappy column about the loss of individual rights and the discarding of old customs for a set of danged, new-fangled ideas.

The humanitarian urge to succor the idle poor in the midst of idle acres still persisted like the barber's itch and, in 1079 A. D., "the Chinese socialist," Wang An-Shih, was given carte blanche to lift humanity by its boot-straps. For ten long years he subjected society

to socialism, until he and his cohorts were classed as false alarms and were unceremoniously exiled to Mongolia.

Matters continued to alternate between hay and grass—between chills and fevers—until the same old Polybius-Herodotus urge made a return visit through the pen and hand of our own Ben Franklin in 1787. Ben summed up the previous innings in the age-old game of taxation, ambition and avarice and opined that our freedom and democracy—the same old stuff of Cleon's day—was aheadin' for a monarchy; and in 1850 Herbert Spencer nods his head and sez: "Them's my sentiments, too." By 1929 H. L. Mencken had delivered himself of his irritation over our grumbling farmers and ventured the drastic notion that farmers ought to be abolished.

As we look back over the pages of history it is apparent that we cannot accuse civic leaders of precipitousness in inquiring into the drab details and dreary days of "the poor ye have always with you." Nor can we accuse our modern colleges of ill-considered haste. Rather, a very conservative, cautious and slow approach has been made toward the ultimate economic freedom of the masses.

So while our judicial intellects are trying to find under which shell the economic pea is hiding—whilst Congress is nonplussed over the total lack of altruism on the part of our wealthy taxpayers, who thriftily take advantage of every loophole in every unworkable tax law on private enterprise—it is our ambition to raise a fund in the sum of ten millions of dollars in the next thirty days, with which to found an institute to compile every fix-it program which thus far has failed to improve on the laws of Nature.

Our institute will mail, every thirty minutes, a list of all unworkable social experiments which have been tried by man since the first tax on cave-homes was levied in accordance with the distance penetrated by the sunlight into the mouth of the cave. These thirty-minute mailings will go forward to each and every legislative member who is too lazy to read history and who believes that his own thoughts are original in the field of taxation, labor disputes and paternalism.

We hope that our labors shall not have been in vain.

By THOMAS N. ASHTON

**T**HERE is nothing so pathetic as the jobless man who is totally ignorant of his rights to use the earth. . . . An aimless, wretched, hungry man is a blasphemy and a contradiction of the intention of the Creator!

—FRANCIS NEILSON in "Man at the Crossroads."

**M**EN like Henry George are rare, unfortunately. One cannot imagine a more beautiful combination of intellectual keenness, artistic form, and fervent love of justice. Every line is written as if for our generation.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN.