

tribution. But if such wealth is earned the community has no right to it. We ask our friend to read "Progress and Poverty." There he will find his question answered. The missing wealth of the poor is not to be put back into the pockets of the poor by any such method as he advocates. The leak may be stopped by a radical but simple change in the methods of distribution.

BUT from another quarter comes at last a real remedy for unemployment and the periodical depressions that visit us. The writer of this new solution tells us it is "very different from socialism." Perhaps it is. It appears that we have a lot of "commonwealth," public parks, roadsides, etc. We are told that "all the spare labor in the country (by which we suppose is meant the unemployed) could be used in improving the roadbeds of the United States." We are urged to take (not actually take in the sense of resumption of ownership but take into consideration) the land on both sides of the railway tracks, so conspicuous as we travel in "our" trains. Do not smile at the word "our." Increasingly large numbers of the unemployed could be absorbed in the improvement of "our commonwealth."

THERE is a certain thoroughness in the suggestion. To make all this really effective we are to have a Peace Time Army, just like a Standing Army. There is to be a General Staff, and these officers of the Peace Time Army and these members of the Regular Army are to receive wages and salaries sufficient to draw the talent that is required. When the Peace Time Army expands to take all those out of employment, the payment of those temporarily employed would be the same as that of the enlisted men in the War Time Army, so as not to take out of private employment those normally engaged in industry. When a corporation like the United States Steel Corporation wants ten thousand men, application will be made to the General Staff of the Peace Time Army, who would immediately dispatch those with the requisite qualification.

THE money for all this would be financed from loans backed by the United States. The loans are to run for twenty-five years. It might be unjust, the author of this plan cautiously says, to tax industry, where so much is being done by business men to relieve distress. But how these loans are to be paid except by taxing industry we are not informed. We are cautioned that the Peace Time Army must be kept free from politics! We seem to sense how easy that would be, like taking the liquor and tariff questions out of politics!

WE have for the most part described this proposal in the words of its very eminent originator. If we were to take it seriously, it has some menacing aspects, since it is a suggestion for the establishment of a new

national slavery for the workers. But of course it is no more practical than a Gilbertian burlesque. Nor is it intended for a contemporary satire like the memorable work of Gilbert and Sullivan. It belongs to the Opera House of Political Economy, a rapidly growing literature of speculative oddities, weird, mysterious and fantastic. And that the name of the originator may not be lost in this casual periodical literature of his time, here is his name—Richard T. Ely; and the article in which the proposal is outlined in all the stark nakedness of its absurdity is the March number of the *Review of Reviews*.

Justice and Poverty

T. N. CARVER, in *Boston Herald*

WHY not try justice? This formula is used rather frequently when plans for the prevention of poverty are being considered. They who use this formula seem to assume that injustice is the sole cause of poverty. This assumption needs looking into.

We need not waste time discussing the possible connection between injustice and such disasters as drought, flood, fire, accident or sickness. Hardships resulting from disaster are not commonly included under poverty. Poverty generally means the inability to secure, in ordinary times and conditions, the means of supplying one's needs. It is only with poverty in this sense that we are here concerned.

Justice, so far as the distribution of wealth is concerned, generally means that each shall share in the products of industry in proportion to his product, to the value of his product, or to the real value of his work. To pay a man what he needs, merely because he needs it, whether he has earned it or not, is not justice but charity. It is given out of the goodness of the giver's heart and not as a return for what is received.

It is obvious that there are many people who are able to get as much as they need. It is also certain that there are many who do not get as much as they earn or than they produce. But are these two groups identical? If they are, then justice would eliminate poverty. If they are not, it would not help the group which is not getting what it needs to give the other group what it earns.

Another way of presenting the problem is to point out that there are, on the one hand, many who do not get as much as they need, and that, on the other hand, there are others who get vastly more than they earn or than they produce. When these two groups are thus contrasted, it seems to be implied that if the unearned wealth now going to one group were given to those who actually earn, poverty would disappear. But this, again, assumes that those who actually earned that wealth are the identical ones who are now poor, or who are not getting as much as they need. That is an assumption which ought to be verified before we assert too positively that justice will eliminate poverty. Until that is verified, we should

ow at least a small place for charity and not place our sole reliance on justice.

Justice, of course, we must have at all costs, whether it will eliminate poverty or not. We may find, however, that after we have approximated as closely as possible to justice in the distribution of wealth, there will still be cases of poverty which can only be relieved out of the goodness of our hearts, people whose needs must be supplied whether they can earn anything or not. Charity is a good word and its spirit should be preserved and not be thrown into the incinerator.

Let us be a little more specific and assume, for the sake of argument, that the Single Taxer is right in his contention that the rent of the land is unearned by the landlord. Let us go further and assume that this rent is taxed away, that it is taken by the government in lieu of other taxes, and used to pay all the necessary expenses of government, including schools. That particular form of unearned wealth, as the Single Taxer calls it, would then be taken away from those who formerly received it, and redistributed. Will it find its way to those in need, or will it go, most of it, to those who are already pretty well to do or at least above the poverty line?

Of course, those who now pay taxes will be relieved, but they are not usually the people in need. They will also have more money to spend, and, it may be contended, their increased spending will stimulate business, increase employment, and thus help the poor. But their increased spending will be balanced by decreased spending on the part of the former landlords. It looks like a case of cancellation. We may decide that it is better that those who now pay taxes should spend more money for what they want than that landlords should spend it for what they want. But so far as helping the poor is concerned, it does not seem to make much difference to them which group spends the money.

Let us pursue the matter a step further. Business men are heavy taxpayers on their buildings and equipment. These taxes are a heavy burden. Let us grant that if the taxes were all put on the landlords, it would be a great relief to active business, and that business would therefore expand. This expansion would mean more employment for both labor and capital, and better interest rates, salaries and wages. But would the benefit go chiefly to the poor whose wages are too low to supply their needs, or would it go to those who are already well to do?

It would depend upon other circumstances. If technologists and skilled laborers were scarce, and if unskilled labor from abroad could come to the country in unlimited numbers, it is pretty certain that wages of unskilled labor would not rise. The chief benefit would go to those whose labor was scarce enough to command high wages or salaries. Under such circumstances, it is pretty certain that the Single Tax would not eliminate poverty.

The Single Tax has been selected, not for the purpose of special attack, but merely as one example of the numer-

ous attempts to achieve what various reformers call justice. Whatever else may be said for it, there is no reason for believing that it will eliminate poverty. Precisely the same remark may be made of every other scheme for achieving distributive justice. It cannot be too often repeated that we must have justice, as soon as we discover what it is, whether it will eliminate poverty or not. But if we really want to eliminate poverty we must have something more than justice.

[EDITORIAL-NOTE.—Professor Carver is in the same predicament as Pilate. Instead of asking "What is truth?" the professor asks "What is justice?" and confesses he does not know, though he indicates his belief that we must have it.

It is an ingenious argument. But the fallacies are obvious. The contention that economic rent might just as well go to the landlords, that it makes no difference which group spends it, and that if it went to the workers the total sum spent would be just about the same, and therefore it is only a problem of cancellation, is a perfect gem of reasoning. For if economic rent is not earned by the landlords, if its present recipients are to be classed as receivers of loot, then they are not easily identified as differing from such eminent personages as Robin Hood and Captain Kidd. The reasoning is not ours, it is the professor's, and it is not we but the professor who owes the landlords an apology for the harsh implication.

The argument of the Single Taxer is not based upon the contention that economic rent would be redistributed so as to give more of the same money to the poor to spend. Economic rent would go into the public treasury, not into the pockets of any group. The resultant benefits to the poor, who pay most of the taxes, would be the abolition of all taxation and the freeing of all natural opportunities, which would so raise wages as to give every worker employment, whether his labor be skilled or unskilled. If it would result in an increase of salaries and wages, as Professor Carver in a moment of inadvertence seems to admit, then he need not ask himself whether these benefits would go chiefly to the poor, for it is in wages and salaries that the poor are mainly interested.

Professor Carver crowds a great many errors into a little space; indeed his cute little essay is quite a masterpiece in its way. He is to be congratulated that his arguments are quite new; we do not recall having heard them before, at least not put in the same way, and this is something of an achievement after fifty years of controversy. We think, however, that Mr. John S. Codman in the article that follows has made an effective reply.—EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM.]

Reply to Professor Carver

JOHN S. CODMAN, in *Boston Herald*

IN your issue of Feb. 16, Prof. Carver devotes about half an editorial to a discussion of "the Single Tax" and reaches the conclusion that "whatever else may be said about it, there is no reason for believing that it will eliminate poverty."

The theory and programme of Single Tax have been very well and briefly expressed as follows: "The rent of the land belongs to the people; the first duty of government is to collect it and abolish all taxation." If the programme indicated by this pronouncement were carried out, certain very oppressive restrictions on the industry of the country would be removed. These restrictions at all times prevent industry from being as active and as profitable as it should