

means to destroy the monopoly on land and devote the rent of land to public purposes. The taxes that now fall on houses and other improvements would be removed. But the chief and abiding result would be to raise wages by making land available for all purposes on fair terms. Under that dispensation there would be no "housing problem for the working classes" any more than there is now a housing problem for those who have sufficient income to look after their own requirements without State help.

"Weller's Journal."—The MANCHESTER CITY NEWS, 19th July, contains the following editorial note:—

"A Property Owner," who does not send his name, writes caustically that the name of the CITY NEWS should be changed to WELLES'S JOURNAL, because we have inserted letters from Mr. Weller on "Land Values." (Our friend omits to mention that we have also inserted full replies, and taken no sides in the controversy.) "No doubt," he adds, "you get well paid for this literature." Alas! such is our short-sightedness that we have never thought of requesting Mr. Weller to forward twenty-five guineas for our personal enrichment with each of his communications, but perhaps he will be good enough to take the hint. This will enable the editor to retire at a much earlier period than he had originally contemplated.

Mr. Weller has been discovered, red-handed, as the saying is, but knowing the man and the business he transacts at 5, Cross Street, Manchester, we regret we can hold out no hope of the early retirement of the Editor of the M.C.N., on the basis of that twenty-five guineas request, nor on any compassionate ground whatever. As for "A Property Owner," could he not invest in a commanding interest in the paper, or "get at" someone who may hold the position. But why worry over a Press correspondence. Why not take Dundas White's LAND-VALUE POLICY to find out how the remedy is going to benefit the community as a whole, including the property owners?

In a review of Dr. J. Dundas White's new book LAND-VALUE POLICY, the YORKSHIRE OBSERVER of 19th July says:—

It is to the credit of the Committee for Taxation of Land Values that in this handbook they have found a writer who, at any rate, robs the subject of its difficulties by making a statement of the case such as all who can read can understand. The method of presentation, too, is good, passing from the fundamental considerations to brief summaries of what such authorities as Henry George have to say, and to the attempts in this country, in our Colonies, and in other countries that have been made to reform taxation so that the real basis should be the value of the land.

Students who merely wish to be well equipped with the pros and cons of the subject, as part of their desire to be well informed on a variety of subjects, will find it as invaluable as the beginner who wishes to have a general idea of the policy before he attempts the serious study of those who have made the subject a life work.

It will probably come as a surprise to the general reader that the subject is no mere dream of the social reformer, but one which has in many countries, and in some of our Colonies in particular, not only been tried, but has become the real basis of taxation.

* * *

It is announced that a Liberal Summer School will be held in Edinburgh in September. The lecturers include Mr. P. Wilson Raffan, M.P., who will speak on the Taxation of Land Values.

ROBINSON CRUSOE UP-TO-DATE

By John Sturgis Codman

(Being Chapter II. of Mr. Codman's "Unemployment and Our Revenue Problem.")*

If Daniel Defoe were to rewrite in these times his history of Robinson Crusoe, he would doubtless be aware of the necessity of altering it greatly. In the light of present-day industrial conditions, Crusoe's first thought after the shipwreck would have been to get a job, and his despair in finding himself entirely alone with no hope of an employer would be vividly portrayed by the author of his history.

After he had "walked the streets" in vain, however, it would undoubtedly have at last occurred to Crusoe, since he was a man of unusual ingenuity, that he might just as well be his own employer. He would then have hastened back to the wreck, and, as he did in the original version of the story, he would have landed what stores and tools he found there and with these as his stock in trade would have started to do business.

Very soon, however, another question would begin to trouble him, namely: how to do business without a landlord; but having already overcome one difficulty, his resourceful mind would easily surmount this second one, and finding that no one interfered with him and not seeing any "no trespass" signs about, he would promptly decide to be his own landlord and would hand himself a title to the island by right of discovery or conquest. Then at last his modern mind would be at rest, and in his own person would be represented all those who share in the products of industry under the institutions of civilization. He would be, first, the landowner, secondly, the tenant and employer of labour, and thirdly, the employee or wage-earner.

When this new version of the story reached the discovery of the footprint in the sand, there would be great rejoicing on Crusoe's part, not because he would anticipate the arrival of an employer or a landlord (all that idea would have been forgotten), but because now he would see visions of many tenants from whom he would receive rent, some acting as employers and some as wage-earners, and upon whose shoulders he would be able to throw the burden of organizing and carrying on production.

Since the savages encountered by Crusoe could hardly be expected to recognize his title to the island, the story might well continue as in the original version, ending with the defeat of the cannibals and the release of their prisoner, Man Friday. Then another change in the story would be necessary, since, with his modern views, Crusoe could not hold Friday as a slave. He would therefore free Friday and would offer to rent to him for, let us say, so many coconuts, a small portion of the island, so that Friday might have at least a place to rest his head at night, while during the day he could work on Crusoe's estates, and thus earn enough coconuts to pay the rent, and to buy from Crusoe a few of the other things which he (Friday) might need and had himself produced.

The social arrangements of the island community would now begin to resemble the institutions of modern civilization, but it would require the presence of a few more civilized beings to make the resemblance really close. This could easily be arranged by supposing that another shipwreck had thrown a group of men, women and children upon the island. These new arrivals, being assumed to be thoroughly civilized, would of course recognize Crusoe's prior title to the island, and their first thought, therefore, would be to secure jobs in his service, or to rent from him (or even to buy if they had

* B. W. Huebsch, New York. Price \$1. Reprinted by permission.

anything to offer) some portion of the island. It may be assumed that some, at least, of the newcomers would secure leases of the land, if not freeholds, and that some of the others, but perhaps not all, would secure jobs either from Crusoe or his tenants. Thus very soon the society of the island would be capable of some such classification as the following :

(1) Robinson Crusoe himself, owning the island through right of discovery or conquest and living comfortably, without need of labour, on the rents received from his tenants.

(2) Crusoe's tenants, striving to utilize their opportunities in production, often organizing and directing the labour of others, but squeezed between Crusoe's demand for all the rent he can get and the demands of employees for all the wages they can get.

(3) Those neither owning nor renting land and therefore without opportunity to produce except as employees. These hire themselves out, when they can, to Crusoe's producing tenants, helping the latter to pay Crusoe's rents and receiving their portion of what is left to the producers after paying Crusoe.

Now in such a society as this, Crusoe would be in a position to dictate to what extent others should use the island for productive purposes, and he would expect tribute to be paid to him whenever his permission was granted for the use of any part of it. When his demands were not too exacting and he was willing to rent even the best locations at reasonable prices, his tenants would have the hope of some profit from production and would employ many others to assist them. At times, however, observing the prosperity of his tenants, Crusoe would be tempted to try for a larger share of the product of industry, and by demanding higher rents would check business, force it perhaps to be carried forward on inferior locations, thus diminishing his tenants' ability to employ the labour of others. In such a society opportunity to produce would be restricted, unemployment would be chronic and at times acute, and the cause of this condition would obviously be Crusoe's ownership of the island.

Let us take one step farther in the story of Robinson Crusoe. Let us suppose that he has died, that the island is no longer owned by one individual, but has, through successive division of estates and through sales from time to time, passed into the hands of a considerable number of persons who, however, still aggregate but a small minority of the whole people. Let us suppose that most of these new owners of the island have obtained their holdings by actual purchase and that many even have paid too high a price for the privilege and are therefore "land poor," that is, are unable to sell what they hold for as much as they paid for it. Is there any reason to suppose that the economic conditions in the island will be to any material extent changed by this division of land-ownership? Not at all; for the power to control the use of the island and to exact tribute from the producers without rendering any service in return will remain as before. Those who own no land will still be dependent on others for the opportunity to produce, and the competition of these landless persons among themselves will force them to pay high rents or prices for land, or to accept the position of employees at low wages, while unemployment of a greater or less number will still be a feature of the system. In other words, to summarize briefly, those who own the island will determine, just as Crusoe did, to what extent its productive capacity shall be utilized and how many of the inhabitants shall have the opportunity to earn a living.

Now, finally, let us suppose that the people of the island are determined to end a state of affairs so unsatisfactory to the great majority of present and future

generations. What would be the best way to proceed? Would it be to dispossess the landowners and abolish the system of private property in land? By no means. Such a proceeding would be unnecessary and therefore unwise. The proper step to take would be obvious as soon as the people of the island came to recognize the following principles essential to community life:

First, as recognized by every modern State, that the people as a whole are sovereign. Second, that therefore the island was in fact the property of the whole people. Third, that individual possession of a part of the island was not therefore absolute in its nature, but was essentially a privilege conferred on the holders by the people as a whole.*

From these principles the conclusion follows that the holders of the privilege of exclusive possession of land should be required to pay periodically proper compensation to the people as a whole. It also follows naturally that this compensation for privilege should be in proportion to the value of the opportunity afforded and should not depend upon the use of that opportunity. In other words, he who utilized his opportunity should pay no more and no less than another who with equal opportunity failed to make use of it. If this plan were put into effect, the economic troubles of the island would rapidly disappear, as it would become distinctly unprofitable for landowners to withhold valuable opportunities from industry. Since they would have to pay for their opportunities what they were worth, whether they used them or not, they could not afford to let valuable opportunities lie idle. They would be under pressure to employ labour, and if they were not willing to do so they would feel obliged to rent or sell their holdings to others who in their turn would employ labour. Furthermore, this pressure upon landowners would make it impossible to demand excessive rentals or prices. Thus the inducement to landowners to restrict or obstruct industry would be removed, while at the same time the payments for privilege would furnish revenue to the community to be used for community purposes, thus avoiding the necessity of penalizing industry by taxation.

It has been the object of this new version of the story of Robinson Crusoe to demonstrate that unemployment with all its evil consequences is certain to exist if private possession of the land and the natural resources of a State is permitted, unless the power to withhold valuable land from industry is prevented, by requiring from the holders an adequate and properly proportionate payment for the privilege of ownership. To what extent and in what manner is this requirement met in a modern state?

* "It is a received and undeniable principle of law that all lands in England are held immediately by the King."—Blackstone.

"The first thing the student has to do is to get rid of the idea of absolute ownership. Such an idea is quite unknown in English law. No man in law is absolute owner of his lands, but only holds estate in them."—Williams, on Real Property.

By HENRY GEORGE

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