

course not. It is quite evident that force and not justice is the basis of his claim of ownership.

If it is finally determined that the children of Nature are the rightful owners of the land, as Ingersoll said they were, this change in the theory of land tenure would be prejudicial to the rights of none except those holding land unused, hoping to reap the harvest that belongs to others.

—JAMES EUGENE OLIVER

Where Voltaire Stood

DURING the reign of Louis XV there arose in France a group of economic students, who were later called "physiocrats", and who had advanced ideas on political economy. They antedated Adam Smith as free traders and Henry George as Single Taxers. Like modern advocates of the same ideas they were misunderstood and one of those who misunderstood their doctrines was Voltaire. He satirized what he erroneously supposed to be their proposal in his "Man of Forty Crowns", which was a forerunner of the modern objection to the Single Tax wherein there is presented a millionaire "who owns no land" and whose fortune is all invested in securities and a farmer "who owns nothing but land". Voltaire overlooked that the millionaire's securities are but title deeds to or liens upon valuable land while the farmer's land has little or no value aside from improvements. Perhaps the physiocrats failed themselves to make this as clear as they should. But Voltaire was a wise man and consequently was not averse to changing his mind. He did so in this case. This is a fact not stated in Professor E. R. A. Seligman's use of this satire as a refutation of modern Single Tax arguments, nor is it mentioned in the tract issued by the National Association of Real Estate Boards which follows Seligman's example.

Voltaire made clear his change of view when the landed gentry of France and their sycophants, the Babbitts of that day, made war on Turgot, the physiocratic Finance Minister who established free trade in grain, abolished forced labor on the public roads, recommended taxing land values to pay for road improvements and, the landed interests feared, was about to put into effect the Single Tax advocated by the physiocrats after abolishing the local tariffs. Voltaire came to Turgot's aid with a pamphlet in defense of his views. It must have been unanswerable for the parlement of Paris suppressed it. Turgot was dismissed and on hearing of this Voltaire wrote:

"I have nothing but death to look forward to since M. Turgot is out of office. The thunderbolt has blasted my brain and my heart."

This was more than mere rhetoric. He died shortly afterward. Undoubtedly he recognized the calamity to France involved in the loss of opportunity to put in effect the principles he had once satirized..

—SAMUEL DANZIGER.

Our Australian Letter

TWO economic missions, one invited by a Nationalist and the other by a Labor Government, have visited Australia from high financial and industrial circles in England, have examined into our condition, and have pronounced what is practically the same verdict, namely, that national bankruptcy can only be averted by a complete change of system. A few figures will disclose what our financial position really is. According to the latest figures just issued we owe over a billion pounds sterling—£1,100,598,000 to be precise—on account of the Commonwealth and States, on which we pay interest amounting to over £55,000,000 every year, with the rate of interest continually increasing. Our budgets both commonwealth and State show a deficit every year, there are only a trifle over 6,000,000 people to bear the burden, and oversea financiers have refused to lend us any more till our credit is restored. Both Commonwealth and State Governments in a panic have resolved to make their future budgets balance; they are decreasing expenditure in every direction, public works are being abandoned, salaries and wages are coming down with a rush, and everything but the right thing is about to be done to put our house in order and restore our credit. No competent person who has watched our policy in the past is surprised at what has happened. The only surprise is that Australia has not broken down long before. For her position is utterly unsound.

Australia is like a pyramid resting on a three-cornered foundation—Protection, Land Monopoly, and Artificial Wages—each of which is morally inequitable and therefore economically unsound. While drastic reductions are good in their way they are only palliatives at the best and our position can never be wholly retrieved so long as our foundations are unsound. The Labor Party—or at any rate the Industrial and Trade Union section of it—denounces any reduction in wages so long as the present high rate of interest is still paid. Some even go so far as to advocate the repudiation of the immense debt we incurred for carrying on the war, As if war debts were in a water tight compartment all by themselves and could be dealt with apart from other debts, which economists tell us they can't. The principle at stake is the same. If you repudiate one you must repudiate the other.

WHAT IS WANTED

What is wanted is not repudiation of the war debt but the repudiation of false principles, of the rotten foundation on which our policy has been hitherto reared. Let us consider for a moment what these rotten foundations are. I: In the first place, Protection, which is the pet hobby of the Labor Party as it is the fetish of them all, is the compulsory enrichment of one section of the community at the expense of the primary producers and the rest of the community. This is manifestly unfair to the