

PROFESSOR WALTER H. HAMILTON, whose address at a meeting of the Foreign Policy Association stirred Harry Weinberger to action (see January-February LAND AND FREEDOM), stated what we regard as a typical misunderstanding. He said: "Ours is a machine civilization. * * * 'Progress and Poverty' is exactly the kind of book I should expect in an agrarian age, which is just passing, and in a society in which wealth is land. Thus it was taught that the unearned increment was a product of the superiority of fertile over infertile soil."

THERE is no discussion in "Progress and Poverty" of fertile over infertile soil beyond an allusion or two. And there was some machinery at the time the book was written. Though machinery has increased since then, its relation to land remains the same. Land is not wealth now any more than it was then, but it is the source of all wealth and the material on which and from which all wealth is produced. And the land question is not a rural question; its urban importance, where a few choice lots are greater in value than an entire agricultural county, overshadows its rural importance. It might be said that the land question is chiefly an urban question.

HOW then comes the curious notion that "Progress and Poverty" is concerned only or mainly with the land question in its agricultural aspects? Henry George knew little or nothing of farming, so he was not influenced by his surroundings in that way. His life had been spent in cities. And how can any professor, or any one else, speak thus of a work which proposes to take economic rent in taxation when such economic rent manifests itself very slightly in rural communities and preponderantly in cities and towns?

THE entire fabric of civilization was woven out of land; the foundation of all the comforts and grandeur of cities, houses and palaces in which people live, was land. Land—and cabbages! St. Paul's Cathedral and turnips! Why ignore the cathedrals, the great stately blocks of buildings, the great emporiums of trade, the great machines, and think only in terms of cabbages and turnips? Where civilization does most for the people, there the services of government are the greatest, there the land question assumes its most acute form. Did Henry George see this? Why, it was as an explanation of this varied phenomena that the book was written—that was its chief concern, and not the differing values of agricultural land arising from degrees of fertility. The book was not written, as Professor Hamilton says, in the terms of a survey of the economic law in an agrarian society of about 1830, but fifty years later in the terms of a survey of the economic law of 1931, or any year you please, since economic law is the same in 1930 as in 1830.

IT is a persistent fallacy—this iteration and reiteration that land is an increasingly negligible economic factor. In the Washington, D. C., *Daily News* of Feb. 20 there is an

article by Robert P. Scripps, headed "Land Hunger No Longer a Dominant Economic Factor." The writer says that "Great Britain has been in a bad way economically for a longer period than the United States * * * yet the British people have had access on a per capita basis to more free land and undeveloped natural resources than have Americans."

AND as if this clinched the argument, Mr. Scripps passes to the consideration: "It would seem that, failing the unusual, such as rapid population accretions, or a greater disruption of world markets on a large scale, free land and undeveloped natural resources are of small account in our present system of world economics." All this is written with special reference to what the writer calls "the Single Tax plan of Henry George." "The theory was," Mr. Scripps proceeds to explain, "that as long as you find available to the people free or cheap land * * * the individual prosperity of that nation is guaranteed."

ADAM SMITH, writing before we were a confederation, and noting the higher wages prevailing in the colonies as contrasted with wages in Great Britain and the Continent of Europe, with his usual sound judgment assigned the cause to cheap and free land. Land is no longer cheap. There are vast undeveloped natural resources, but these are neither free nor cheap. And it will be news to the people of Great Britain that the land of the British colonies is free—and we suppose it is to her colonies that reference is had. Let the native Briton start to make his home anywhere in the lands of Great Britain's far-flung possessions and he will find every desirable locality pre-empted and held at a stiff price. The landlord has got there before him. And this is true wherever the system of unrestricted private ownership of land prevails.

HAS anything been changed? Has the relation of the factors, Land, Labor and Capital, altered since Henry George, or even since Adam Smith? Unconsciously many modern writers talk as if some new element had been discovered from which wealth is now drawn. Mr. Scripps is not thinking—he is confused by the complexities that he conjures up. And so he keeps right on talking. Now, where does Mr. Scripps live? On land. Where are his newspapers printed? On land, of course. And on land increased enormously as "a dominant economic factor" since Henry George wrote. What does he eat and where with is he clothed? With the products from the land reacted upon by human labor. And from where come the great presses that turn out the printed sheets? Land, land, always land. And always we are confronted with the tribute-taker who draws from all these great enterprises, among which are Mr. Scripps's many newspapers, the share known as economic rent, the price of a still dominant economic factor.

It seems so hard for Mr. Scripps to understand. He says: "The existence of undeveloped lands within the United States today does not relieve our present situation." Of course not. Nor would these undeveloped lands if multiplied a dozen times do anything to relieve it. The fact that they are undeveloped does not help the situation; in reality that is in part the trouble. Nor is this fact cited by Mr. Scripps at all relevant to the situation: "Western states contain millions of acres today purchasable for less than they were twenty years ago." True, doubtless, but what of it? How does that prove that land is no longer "a dominant economic factor"? What is probably asked for these acres is all that they are worth or more, just as twenty years ago the asking price might have been more than they were worth. Many of these acres were subjects of land booms which carried the price asked beyond what they should have been at any time. It is the economic rent that determines the selling price of these acres, and the selling price is based on their earning power. If something has happened to affect the earning power, of course the selling price is less, just as is the case with other millions of acres, rural and urban alike, in the East and West, where the selling prices have mounted higher than they were twenty years ago. So land as an economic factor appears to be very much with us.

VERY difficult it is to be patient and polite. It is Satan who whispers in the ear of St. Anthony in Flaubert's great work: "What after all if the absurd should be true?" But we do not believe it. Correct reasoning from obvious facts still has its value. And we should demand it from those who write for public consumption. We ought to insist on a recognition of cause and effect; we cannot treat fallacy as if it were a pet canary and sings sweetly. Mr. Scripps writes well; he is a newspaper man who knows how to use English. But his reasoning is deplorable. He alleges that the most solid factor in the economic structure, land and its rent, is disappearing, yet he draws large monthly checks for those who produce nothing and from whom he gets nothing but permission to live and print newspapers on the earth—payment for permission to use the economic factor which Mr. Scripps declares is now negligible. It should occur to him that he is paying rather high for a factor that has almost no existence.

Is Saul also among the prophets? President Hoover has seen a light. He looks with disfavor upon those who profit by the increase of land values made by the community. He says so in language that is unmistakable: voices good Henry George doctrine. But hold! It is with reference only to the Indians that he is speaking. He probably still believes that white men should continue to take from other white men the socially created values that attach to land.

BUT at least he is very explicit so far as the Indians are concerned. In his veto of the Choctaw Indian land bill he says: "This case raises a very wide issue whether we are to undertake revision of treaties entered into for acquiring of Indian lands during the last 150 years. The values of such lands have obviously increased, and the undertakings entered into at the time the agreements were made may naturally look small in after years. But the increased values have been the result of the efforts of our citizens in building this nation." This is good doctrine if universally applied. In recent years some of our Indian friends have been enriched by the discovery of oil. Somebody must be after those oil wells!

ARTHUR J. BAILEY, of the People's Church at Olean, N. Y., has a letter in a recent issue of the *Christian Advocate*. It is entitled "Christ's Teaching Applied to Unemployment." He says: "All students of the problem recognize that unemployed labor is largely the result of idle capital." Not *all* students. A few would challenge the contention and are prepared to show that idle labor and idle capital are consequences, not causes. They are therefore able to see that most of the proposed remedies are futile.

AND along with these is Mr. Bailey's own suggestion of a sliding scale of taxation, with the taking over of 50 per cent. of all fortunes of a million dollars or over. He calls this "a safe and sane redistribution of wealth." He reassures the wealthy by telling them that most of the wealth would return to them, though he is rather vague as to the *how* of this. He says, rather naively, that his plan "would work no hardship, as so much wealth is worthless to those who possess it," a statement which to the rich might not be wholly appreciated.

MR. BAILEY is a sincere Christian. He wishes to apply the doctrines of Christ to economics and social conditions. There is only one way: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. It consists in recognizing the God-given right of all men to the use of the earth, and the government's right to the collection of those values which are created by the community. It consists in the recognition of the distinction between those matters which are individual and those which are communal. There is no need of a sliding scale of taxation to take the wealth of the rich, and there is no way of determining by such a method just what proportion of the wealth of the rich belongs to the rich. Without intending it Mr. Bailey is advocating measures that are predatory, not Christlike.

THE question really requires more thought than Mr. Bailey has given to it. For if the wealth of the rich is unearned something is at fault with the methods of dis-