

The Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of Washington, in session at Spokane on December 11th, 12th, and 13th, urged submission by the Legislature of Constitutional Amendments providing for the Constitutional Initiative, the Recall, the Short Ballot, and "for a tax on the unearned increment through the increase in land value."

Congressman WarrenWorth Bailey, of Pennsylvania, introduced on January 22nd a direct land value tax Bill to raise \$200,000,000 by apportionment among the States and District of Columbia, in proportion to population. In a statement to the Press, Mr. Bailey showed that his proposed tax would be open and above board, that every man would know what he was paying and how much. Moreover, it would stimulate production by forcing valuable land into use and thus afford larger employment to labour and capital. It is in striking contrast with all other proposals yet submitted in Congress.

THE WAR FOR HEALTH : WHO IS THE ENEMY ?

Mr. James Steele (Glasgow) writes in the JOURNAL OF THE SANITARY ENGINEERS (120-122, Victoria Street, London, S.W. 1), December, 1916 :—

As a member of the Institution, I should like to say a few words on the subject.

In the first place, who is the "enemy" we are fighting? Many will doubtless say "bad housing," and I agree they are correct to a certain extent, but then what is the cause of bad housing? I think if we were to go to the root of the cause we should find that it is brought about by the landowners, who hold up the land around our progressive towns until the "public" are forced to pay a fabulous price for housing themselves. In the meantime, of course, every available piece of ground in the town itself is being built upon, causing overcrowding.

Therefore these land owners constitute the enemy. As an illustration they are worse than highwaymen who stop you on the highway, demanding "your money or your life," for the landlord stops you "on the highway to health" and demands "your money and your life."

As recently as Saturday, November 4th, I attended the Land Values League Conference in Glasgow, and the object of this Conference was to put before the Government the necessity for releasing the land to the people for "housing," "industry," &c., by taxing the landowners on the value of their land, which will cause them to sell it rather than pay a tax on practically unremunerative land.

I do not wish this scheme to be confused with Nationalisation or Government acquisition of land, for these are impossible at present, owing to the war, which is absorbing all the available money—and is likely to do so for many years after peace is declared.

This League is a non-party body, and I do not put this before you as a party matter, but in order to help in what is the one great object of life—to help one's fellow men.

At a council meeting of the Institution held on December 6th, it is stated (we quote from the Journal): "Books, pamphlets, &c., presented by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values were received and the letter accompanying them read. It was agreed that the thanks of the Council be conveyed to the donors." The United Committee is always ready to make such gifts to institutes and to individuals concerned to promote thought and discussion on the land and housing problem.

RUMANIAN LAND QUESTION

Need for Thorough Reforms

(From our Correspondent in the Balkan Peninsula.

THE TIMES, March 20th.)

In addition to the purely military factors which entered into the Rumanian reverses a latent but important and deeply-rooted cause of the national misfortunes will be found in the unsound social and economic conditions which, notwithstanding occasional efforts at reform, still prevail in the country.

The system of land tenure, a legacy from mediæval times, still keeps a large proportion of the agricultural population, the bone and sinew of the nation, in a state scarcely distinguishable from serfdom. It is from this class that the bulk of the Rumanian Army is drawn. The peasant soldiers form not only the majority, but by far the best fighting material in the Army; the town-bred troops are very inferior, both in *moral* and *physique*.

The greater number of the peasants work on the estates of large proprietors (*boiars*), which are often let out to middlemen. The rule of the middlemen, who are generally speculators in land, is peculiarly oppressive, while the *boiars* have often been absentees from their estates—have spent their time in Bukarest or Paris.

The system has tended to produce, on the one hand, a pleasure-loving, self-indulgent aristocracy, and, on the other hand, a dispirited and discontented class of agricultural labourers, whose efforts to ameliorate their position have frequently taken the form of outbreaks, sometimes culminating in widespread insurrections, such as those of 1888 and 1907. It was hardly to be expected, in these circumstances, that the Rumanian peasant soldier could rival either in martial spirit or in physical strength the soldiers of nations who are for the most part independent proprietors, who enjoy the fruits of their labour, and realise that they are fighting *pro aris et facis* when called upon to defend their native land. The discontent of the agricultural *proletariat* has been turned to account by the enemies of the country, who in the course of the war have distributed proclamations from aeroplanes declaring that they have come to Rumania as the friends and liberators of the peasants, and exhorting them to rise against their oppressors.

THE KING'S PROMISE.

The fact that the troops have fought in many instances with great bravery must not blind us to the necessity for far-reaching reforms. The peasant soldier has won with his blood the right to possess the soil. A solemn promise of legislation which will confer upon him this right has been made by the King at the opening of the Jassy Parliament. Such legislation will, of necessity, be accompanied, or more probably preceded, by reform of the existing electoral system, which practically confines political power to the wealthier classes. This reform has also been promised in the Royal Speech. The successful conclusion of the war must be followed by a comprehensive and thoroughgoing series of reforms, which will rejuvenate the country and confirm the claim of its Sovereign and Government to direct the destinies of the united Rumanian race.

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