

## The Social Problem In Australia

FOR many years now the leaders of the different denominations in their annual addresses have almost invariably touched in some more or less satisfactory way on the labor problem. Quite recently the Anglican Church in the mother State formed a Christian social union for the purpose of studying the problem and of applying Christian principles to politics, industry and social life, with the final objective of reconstructing the social system on the lines of Christian faith. The union, under the presidency of Dean Talbot, has been doing some good work, and on its initiation a conference was held in the Chapter House of the Anglican Cathedral on the 22nd and 23rd of June, winding up with a public meeting, for the purpose of considering "the present economic situation in Australia." The conference was important as showing the determination of the Anglican Church to get what light it can on the various issues connected with the problem with the view of making its own message more suitable than it is to the times in which we live. The conference, however, proved an egregious failure owing mainly to the fact that only clergymen and university pedagogues delivered addresses, and not a single representative of the working classes expressed the views, philosophic or otherwise, by which large sections of them are animated, or discussed the means, revolutionary or otherwise, by which they hope to reconstruct society. For any conference on the labor problem to be of the slightest use it is absolutely necessary that the workers themselves should take a leading part in it, and submit their schemes of reconstruction to the criticism of the outside world.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT

The two leading speakers—Professor Elton Mayo and Mr. Basil Molesworth, M.A.—both hailed from Queensland. The former dealt with the question from the standpoint of psychology but told us nothing new, and he said not a word that would be of the slightest help in counteracting or in any way meeting the very grave dangers with which civilization is faced. "In material progress our highest hopes have been justified, but the factors which we have disregarded have become forces which make for disruption rather than cohesion. . . . The problem before us is not how to avoid a political revolution but rather how to avoid the decay and disintegration of civilization itself. . . . As a society we tolerated the existence of industrial and political practices which served to extend and to intensify mental instability and disintegration. . . . A freedom setting one section off at the expense of another is no civilization, and civilizations of that sort in the world's history did not last long." Quite so, but all these statements have been made hundreds of times before and by none more eloquently than by Henry George, who, however, did what Professor Mayo and the other pedagogues and lecturers did not attempt to do—he showed how the problem of industrial unrest can be permanently solved with justice to all sections of the

community. One statement, however, Professor Mayo made, viz., that "it is no longer possible to assume that the social structure will somehow persist," which reads like an extract from a stump orator in the Sydney Domain, is, in the opinion of a great many people who probably know quite as much about the question as the learned professor himself, distinctly untrue.

### A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

One of the most sensible contributions to the conference from the Church's standpoint, came from the Bishop of Newcastle (Dr. Stephen), who declared that it was the Church's duty to advocate reform, and it was no mere trifling reform that was required, but the substitution of Christian ideals for pagan, of service instead of self seeking, of sacrifice instead of unhealthy competition. Even in this case the address was marred by a totally wrong view of competition, which, however the Socialists may denounce it, is nevertheless the very salt of industrialism, without which no lasting civilization would ever be evolved. But the gem of the Bishop's discourse, and indeed of the whole two days' conference, was the simple and at the same time profound remark that the objective of the Church should be "to disturb the conscience of those who profited by the present system." In this little sentence, although the Bishop himself may not have fully realized its importance, lies the only hope of the future form of our civilization on equitable lines. He told us, moreover, that the Church must countenance no system which produced evil material results, that there were very obvious defects in the existing order, which did not give full effect and expression to those truths which Christ taught, and further that "private ownership of the means of production was an evil thing in selfish hands." These remarks are all very well in their way, but they show a complete failure to understand the fundamental principle which is at the bottom of the social problem, which is that the value directly given to land by the presence and needs of the community, which no amount of public or private enterprise can directly create, belongs by moral right to the community that created it, and not to private individuals who are now allowed to appropriate it. If the Church would only grasp this very simple but absolutely fundamental principle, and so "disturb the consciences of those who profit by the present system" that they would induce Parliament to appropriate this value on behalf of the community and abolish all other methods of taxation, then for the first time we should see the social problem in a fair way of being solved.

### REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Mr. Holesworth's address on the different revolutionary movements in Australia was a mere recapitulation of the various organizations such as the Workers International Industrial Union, known as the W.I.I.U., and the still more notorious I.W.W., all of which, according to him, have the same aim—the transference of the ownership and control of industry from the capitalists to the workers—the differ-

ence between them being mainly one of method. But the movement which had the chief support, according to the lecturer, was the one aiming at the formation of a O.B.U., One Big Union, for centralizing the fighting power of all the existing industrial unions in one supreme body which should back up the demands of individual and comparatively insignificant unions, with the strength of the whole industrial organization and which could also carry on the control of industry immediately the private owners had been expropriated. He told us nothing we did not know before, and he, too, gave no glimmering of a suggestion as to how the social cancer is to be cured, nor did he indicate any means by which in his opinion the threatened catastrophe might be averted. He, however, did go so far as to assert that "ultimately the actual amount of transference of ownership from private owners to the social owners must take place." This was the only original view he put forward, and in the opinion of a large number of students of the social problem his forecast will prove to be utterly false. It certainly will if the leaders of the people will only study the problem sufficiently to ascertain the real disease from which civilization is suffering, which is simply the private ownership not of capital but of land values, and induce the representatives of the people to demand their appropriation. Mr. Molesworth's address was denounced by one of the audience as "the advocacy of revolution," and the doctrines contained in it as "absolute nonsense," with which opinion many of us will heartily agree.

#### THE CHURCH'S ATTITUDE

The Church's attitude towards revolutionary movements in Australia was defined by the Dean of Melbourne as one of "simple acquiescence in the divine right of Government," in other words of passive obedience to the powers that be, a doctrine that had its greatest vogue in the time of the Stuarts and its most successful exponent in the Vicar of Bray. In the discussion that ensued it was satisfactory to note that there was at least one dissentient in the person of a suburban rector, who pointed out that the industrial revolution was not directed against any divine right of government but against a system that had no claim to divine authority. Several other addresses were delivered before the conference terminated, such as that by the Dean of Melbourne in "The Incarnation and Human Society," by Canon Archdall on "The Supremacy of Christ in all Human Relationships," and another by Professor Mayo on "God and Man," but they were not reported and were doubtless as vague and unsatisfactory as the others. What was really wanted was a debate, such as is about to take place shortly in the Sydney Town Hall between an official representative of the Australian Communists and the president of the Citizens' Democratic Association, in which the views of leading advocates of revolution and evolution will contrast their rival systems and the public will be able to judge. It is, however, extremely significant that during the whole of the proceedings of the conference on the industrial situation,

while many references were made to the private ownership of the means of production not a single one was made to land monopoly, in other words to the private ownership of land values, which nevertheless is the key to the industrial situation. It is now more than ever plain to the discerning eye, and even to the man in the street, that the appropriation of the communal land value fund for communal purposes is the only means by which the objections to the present system may be overcome, the threatened industrial revolution averted, the evils of Socialism or Communism nipped in the bud, and a sound and healthy individualism maintained.

#### AN ALL-AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE

By a somewhat singular coincidence, at the very time when the Anglican Conference in Sydney was defining its attitude towards the labor movement in Australia an all-Australian Conference of Trades Unions was being held in Melbourne to define the attitude of Labor towards revolution. About 300 delegates representing all the leading labor organizations in the Commonwealth were present, and the proceedings lasted an entire week. The main object of the conference was to heal if possible the split in the labor ranks which had been widening instead of narrowing of recent years, and to prepare a fighting platform on which all branches of the Labor Party throughout the Commonwealth, both political and industrial, both moderate and extreme, might unite and work together for the purpose of carrying out. The conference was opened by the president of the Australian Labor Party (Mr. E. J. Holloway) in a remarkable speech in the course of which he declared that in every country rapid strides were being made by the workers towards the socialization of industry, which had been demanded by every industrial conference that had been held. "If," he said, "they were going to make the next decade the transition period from capitalism to socialization it was necessary that all sections of the Labor Party should come together and work for the common good." The very first thing the conference did was to almost unanimously declare the socialization of industry, production, distribution and exchange to be the objective of the Labor Party." The conference, of course, dealt with a number of other subjects, such as the Federal Basic Wage, which it urged the Federal government to immediately enforce, although the government does not propose to do anything of the kind; assisted immigration and Imperial Federation, both of which the conference opposed; workers' compensation on an extended scale, which it endorsed; and self-determination for Ireland of which it approved; but the main result of the week's debate was the adoption of a revolutionary scheme (drawn up by a committee of 12) by which the socialization of industry is proposed to be carried out. The preamble attached to the scheme assumed the existence of a struggle between Capital and Labor caused by the former owning all the means of production, which must continue until capitalism is abolished "by the workers uniting in one class-conscious economic organization to take and

hold the means of production by revolutionary industrial and political action." According to this precious document, which is based on Marxian theories, which have long been abandoned elsewhere as unsound, "the working classes produce all value, the greater the share which the capitalist class appropriates the less remaining for the working classes, therefore the interests of those two classes are in constant conflict."

#### HOW THE REVOLUTION IS TO BE EFFECTED

So long as the Labor Party in Australia deliberately acts on the belief that the interests of Labor and Capital are naturally antagonistic there is absolutely no hope for any real reform, but the workers generally are not quite so imbecile as the above declaration would seem to imply, for one of the strongest of the unions, that of the United Laborers, only recently circularized the whole of the trades unions throughout New South Wales declaring that "the vain, illogical theories" held by those "who now mislead labor must be overthrown," and making the significant admission that "Labor and Capital must be brought into active unity before a more equitable social system can be evolved." This could easily be done if the views taught by Henry George and advocated by large sections throughout the civilized world were adopted. But in the event that the community rejects the sane and reasonable reform involved in the appropriation by the community for communal purposes of the land value now held by private individuals for private purposes how is the individual revolution advocated by the workers to be brought about? How is the transfer of the means of production from the private owners to the community at large—in other words, the expropriation of the capitalists—to be enforced? These are pertinent questions, the answer to which must be found in the action of the Melbourne Conference in supporting the citizen army now being trained for the defence of Australia so that when "The Day" comes round the workers may utilize it for the purpose of enforcing their demands. Which means a civil war in our midst such as will deluge Australia with the blood of our own citizens and bring about a saturnalia of crime and misery such as we have had glimpses of in France, Russia, and Ireland, but never so far, thank God, on Australian soil.

PERCY R. MEGGY.

## Stagnation

**I**N a land of plenty, where production has been multiplied many fold we encounter stagnation. The producer is idle, the world is begging for our wares. During the war it was demonstrated that this country could produce enough in four months to carry us twelve and the producer worked with one hand tied behind him, with four million men in the service. We can do no business abroad with foreign countries because their money is depreciated and we have a tariff law that makes it difficult to exchange merchandise. The majority believe that trade is an exchange of dollars,

but in reality trade is an exchange of merchandise, the dollar being used as a convenience to make the trade easy.

At this time there is no sound measure being discussed by our government to right the situation. We must have an entirely new deal. Men that know must come forward and show the way. So important an undertaking must be by men who are economists. This cannot be left to politicians or to poor country town lawyers that could not earn a living practicing law and yet assume to be legislators.

The burden of taxation must be shifted to land values, the created value of the community that belongs to all. We must stop taxing people because they are industrious, because they want to trade, and because they are a credit and benefit to the community. The time has come when all Single Taxers must boldly assert themselves. Every thinking man knows that there is something radically wrong, and he is looking for a remedy that will make it possible for production to begin, that willing hands may no longer remain idle. Should we that know sit by and allow the situation to drift from bad to worse? Or should we allow others that do not know to experiment with high tariff, low tariff, income tax, outgo tax, profit tax, sales tax, excess profit tax, sky blue tax, or any other conceivable tax?

The people are more willing to listen now than they have been in nearly twenty years; they have more time to read, to think, to listen than ever before. Experience has taught us that high wages and low prices are a physical impossibility under the present arrangement. Prices advance as wages advance and the producer is not in as good a position as he was before the increase took place. Twenty-five years ago a producer was better paid at \$9 per week than he would be if he now received several times the amount, yet how immense are the advances in the arts and sciences, in the production and distribution of wealth within that time.

It is self evident from the above that inasmuch as the producer does not receive the benefits that accrue to civilization they are dissolved in land values. There is no time more opportune than the present to advance the cause of economic freedom and the taxation of land values.

GEORGE J. FOYER.

## A Challenge to a Reactionary

**T**HE *Chicago Journal of Commerce* carries the following at the head of its editorial column.

All the wild ideas of unbalanced agitators the world over, in their ignorant and pitiable quest for happiness through revolution, confiscation of property, and crime, cannot overthrow the eternal truth that the one route to happiness through property or government is over the broad and open highway of *service*. And *service* always means industry, thrift, respect for authority, and recognition of the rights of others.

W. G. SIBLEY.

Under the heading, "Economic Study, a Present Day Economic Need," the *Chicago Journal of Commerce* says:

The student of a university, who wrote in his examination paper that the Single Tax system was a tax on bachelors,