

To Soldiers of the World War—Get Your Bonus out of the Rent of Land

SECOND ARTICLE

A FEW weeks ago all America paid homage to the Unknown Soldier. From the nation's highest to the lowest we bowed in reverence to those who sailed the sea to battle for the cause of world liberty, and who in that cause fought and fell.

Almost at the same moment the body of Albert Miller lay unclaimed in the Buffalo morgue. Friendless, jobless, emaciated from lack of food, Miller had died in a squalid rooming house. With unconscious irony the Medical Examiner said he had died of "natural causes." Is it indeed "natural" for men to die in this way? Is it not because we have set at naught all natural laws that should govern society? The world into which Albert Miller was born was a world owned by others. He found it preempted. He was a trespasser in the land of his Creator. He found none to employ him and no opportunity to employ himself.

FOUGHT FOR A COUNTRY OWNED BY OTHERS

He had fought for a country not one inch of which he could use save by the permission of others. Bravely indeed had he fought. As a Dispatch Rider, a particularly hazardous service, he had brought the news of the armistice to British General Headquarters. He was the first man to carry the news to the men in the line that the war was ended. He wore the British Distinguished Service Medal and he had been decorated for gallantry at Vimy Ridge. And the end of it all was an oak slab in the dimly lighted morgue, his soul fled from the poor starved body ticketed with a small tag marked "unclaimed."

Look you, lords of the land, law makers, you cannot remedy the injustice done to this brave soldier dying at 25, an age when to most of us life is just beginning. He has passed where you can do him neither good nor ill. He was told that he fought to keep the German hordes from laying waste our cities when they were through with France and England. He was asked to fight to keep them away from your perhaps more tenderly reared sisters and wives and daughters. And he took you at your word. And this is the reward you have meted out to him.

ALBERT MILLER ONLY A TYPE

But Alfred Miller is only a type. There are hundreds of thousands like him. We owe them a great debt. We should pay it, in so far as we may, if we have any self-respect. And we can do it without levying an additional penny of taxation. *Pay the bonus, and get it out of the rent of land.* Here is a mine of revenue in the annual land rent of the country many times in excess of the sum required.

The method by which you get the bonus is all-important. If you get it out of a sales tax, as proposed, you saddle

an additional burden on your own mothers and sisters; you have only transferred the wealth from one pocket to another, at best. If you get it out of the rent of land you do not increase taxes; you take what is being paid to the economic slackers by the economic producers. It belongs to the State, the people; it is an unearned income to those who are receiving it. Nearly all economists agree in this, whatever else they disagree upon, that the rent of land is a value that arises independently of what is done by the landowner. And all economists agree that a tax on this economic rent cannot be shifted to other shoulders. It is one of the few taxes that stay put.

PEOPLE AWAKENING TO ITS NEED

And such a tax, which is really not a tax at all, has other obvious advantages. For it does not add a penny to the burdens borne by the consumer. It actually lessens them by releasing land for use, and thus cheapening it. By taking the speculative value out of it, what is left is the real value, no longer determined by a market scarcity of land. It will release many opportunities for employment if heavy enough, forcing landowners to use their land or let others use it.

In my previous article, I pointed out that nearly half a million votes were cast in California, Washington and Oregon for this principle. It has made converts in every quarter of the country. By demanding that the bonus be paid out of the rent of land—by a State or Federal tax—you will enlist in its support able advocates everywhere.

BILL PROPOSED BY A DENVER POST

Already a beginning has been made. The Denver Post No. 1, World War Veterans, are circulating a petition for a bill providing for the money for the payment of the Bonus out of the site value of land. Unfortunately, it exempts land values to the extent of ten thousand dollars. This is with the object of making the measure palatable to smaller landowners, but we cannot believe that the exemption is well advised. Land value, economic rent, site value—all names for the same thing—are the creation of the people, of the public services supplied by government, of the social services provided by society. There is no reason why when this value is taken it should not be taken with something like equality. Five per cent. on \$10,000 is \$500 yearly. The exemption of this amount places the protagonists of this Bonus measure on the defensive.

Such a measure needs no apology in the shape of the proposed exemption. The rent of land belongs to the people. A tax on it is no burden to anybody. Nor are we asking anything from the rich that is rightfully theirs:

we are not asking immunity for those who hold titles to smaller shares in the natural resources of the country.

DANGER OF SUCH EXEMPTIONS IN PRACTICE

Another objection to it is this. Such exemptions defeat themselves, as is proven by the experience of New Zealand. There is nothing to prevent a division of estates among members of a family, or ten thousand dollars in land value being held by innumerable "dummies." We think the Denver War Veterans are ill advised, and that the exemption will subject the bill to attack as vulnerable.

Yet it is a step in the right direction. Better th's than nothing. Colorado ex-service men will get their bonus out of the land rent of Colorado. The land values of the State belong to the people of that State. If it be good policy to pay our defenders a bonus—as we think it is—and at the same time relieve the unemployment situation to the degree that such a tax will tend to force idle lands into use—at least that much is gained, despite what we consider a grave defect in the bill.

PUTTING MONEY INTO THE TREASURY BEFORE TAKING

It is now up to the ex-service men of every State to improve on this measure. Let them take the necessary steps to secure appropriate legislation; let them discuss it at their meetings, formulate such discussion in resolutions, sound the legislators, and take such methods of publicity as will make their demands irresistible.

To the Soldiers of the World War, we address this earnest plea. What you ask for in this way can be subject to no evil criticism. You will have buttressed this demand for the Bonus with the implacable logic that is vulnerable at no single point. You are not asking for something out of the public treasury; you are suggesting a method of filling that treasury and enabling government to pay easily and without trenching upon present resources, the suggested compensation which the voters of one State—New York—voted for overwhelmingly after hearing the arguments from all sides.

SOCIAL JUSTICE REINFORCES THE DEMAND

Any other method of raising the money needed means an addition to an already over-taxed people, as we have shown; any other method will meet with instant and plausible opposition from people who are weary of tax burdens, and who, though not opposed to the Bonus, think the tax scales are already weighted to the limit.

You will begin your agitation with an immeasurable advantage on your side. No issues of new bonds; no new or further taxation. You are asking for a share of the social increment—a pitifully small share in view of your sacrifices made or offered. The justice of your demand is reinforced by the demands of social justice.

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

The Single Tax In New South Wales

THE anniversary of Henry George's birth has again come round, and brought with it the usual reunion of friends and sympathisers from all over the State. We met in the Highland Society's Hall, near the centre of the city, which used to be the German Club, but which since the war has been taken possession of by the Highlanders, and now instead of seeing the portraits of the ex-Kaiser and the rest of that unholy crew frown down on the spectators we see Burns, Sir Walter Scott, General Gordon, and the picturesque scenery around Edinburgh and the Lochs.

Years ago our principal enemy in Sydney was a Wesleyan minister—the Rev. Mr. Clutsam, the Secretary of the Wesleyan Conference, if I remember rightly. Today the President of that Conference (Rev. W. H. Howard) delivered the Anniversary address, while the President of the Free Trade and Land Values League, who occupied the chair, was the Rev. W. H. Beale, ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference, a venerable and lovable figure, with the soul of a poet and luminous eyes in which truth and justice and a power of expressing them are visibly enshrined. It was he who made that splendid declaration that "Democracy is the expression of Christianity," and who more than anyone was responsible for the framing of the elaborate resolutions adopted by the Wesleyan Conference last year for "the Christianizing of social relations," which concluded with the memorable pronouncement that "in the sphere of economics we aim at the Christianizing of industrial relations—the interpretation in economic terms of the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God."

CAPITAL A FRIEND, LAND MONOPOLY THE ENEMY

The Commemoration address, delivered by the Rev. W. H. Howard, was a fine exposition of the principles taught by Henry George. The following paragraph is worth quoting as it deals with the position from an Australian point of view. "Our Socialist friends," said the speaker, "are ever girding at the capitalist. The capitalist cannot hurt the worker apart from land monopoly. If there were no land monopoly all the capital of the country would be engaged in utilizing its resources. This continued denunciation of capitalism by the trades unions and labor leaders showed that the workers did not understand who was their real enemy. It was not Capital apart from landlordism, but the private ownership of land. The speaker quoted John Stuart Mill to the effect that land value was something to which no one could lay moral claim, but which should be taken and used for communal purposes. This was the object of the reform for which they were working today. This question vitally affected us in Australia. Cut off from land the people were restless and discontented. Individuals were allowed to own large areas without any obligation to put them to effective use. Even the present