

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

PRESIDENT HARDING in a special message to Congress disapproves of the proposed bonus to the ex-soldiers. Granting his viewpoint there is much common-sense in what he has to say. The country is facing a crisis in its revenue system, both as to the unprecedented amount required and the enormous difficulties in the selection of methods to secure the needed revenue.

So the boys are not to get their bonus. To raise it for them would call for an increase of taxation. It may be pointed out that such increase would be in effect to take something more from the very classes that are to receive the bonus, unless new and practically untried methods of raising revenue are resorted to. And this is the point to be considered.

THOSE WHO DARED ALL FOR US

The boys who dared all for us, who in the trenches of Flanders faced death in shell-fire and flame, who fought for the country they fondly called "theirs," are to be denied the gift we could so easily give them, because an insane revenue system has broken down. They are the victims of the system, as we all are, but their case emphasizes the *impasse* into which our government has drifted. The limits of taxation have been reached. The administration dare not increase its expenditures, dare not appropriate the money needed for the payment of the soldiers' bonus.

GROUND RENT A TAX LEVIED BY PRIVILEGE

Will not because they dare not. Dare not because they fear to face the outcry that all the friends of privilege would raise were the administration to do the righteous thing. For Privilege does not fear taxation; it has a way of shifting most of the burdens of taxation to the shoulders of the consumers. Privilege thrives on modern taxation; industry alone must shoulder its burdens. Privilege levies a tax of its own, which is GROUND RENT. What should pay for social service goes into private pockets, nor does this administration, any more than the previous one, show any disposition to appropriate any portion of this vast sum to the payment of the Soldiers' Bonus, or for any other purpose.

ENOUGH TO PAY THE BONUS SEVERAL TIMES OVER

Soldiers of the World War! Here is this vast sum, billions of dollars annually, going into the pockets of less than 10 per cent. of the people. It is the value attaching to land; no service is rendered for it. **IT IS AN UNTAXED VALUE.** Driven to their wits' ends to devise methods of revenue to meet the needed expenses, the officers of the government seek to evade the responsibility to you, Soldiers of the War, and to all the rest of us, by dodging this most

obvious source of revenue. Everything is done to evade it, yet here it is in open sight, easy to get at and easy to collect. In New York City alone it amounts annually to nearly half a billion dollars. It would pay any reasonable bonus to the ex-soldiers several times over. It would do it without saddling us with any additional taxation, without disturbing business, without adding a single penny to what the consumer and rent payer must yield up. On the contrary, it would relieve industry by opening up vast sources of unexplored natural wealth, mines, forests, and farm areas held idle and uncultivated. It would do far more for the boys and men who offered their lives for us than the bonus includes, but it would give that, too, and easily.

HERE IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Men of the American Legion, Veterans Associations, Soldiers of Foreign Wars! Here is your opportunity. Demand of the administration that the bonus be paid out of the sum now going as a gratuity to the landlords. Start associations within the ranks of your existing organizations. Let your slogan be, "Give us our bonus out of the rent of land." You will enlist in your support nearly half a million votes cast for the Single Tax in three States on the Pacific Coast, California, Washington and Oregon. And to these would be added perhaps a million more in other parts of the United States, who believe that the rent of land belongs to the people. Tell your servants in the National Legislature that as the value attaching to land is a socially created value that is practically untaxed, the men who receive it as private tribute are "slackers" in a time of national emergency. You came home after fulfilling a dreadful duty to your country only to find yourselves victims of these classes. They stand in the way of the payment of the bonus, rightfully due you for your offer of the supreme sacrifice. There were nearly three million of you in France, with two million more with guns in hand awaiting the call in the great camps with which the country was dotted. Yours is a political power that would be irresistible if properly directed. United in the demand that the bonus be paid out of the rent of land, there is no power in the country that could resist you. Demand this and victory is yours!

A SUGGESTED LINE OF ACTION

This line of action is worthy your consideration. We have indicated the source from which the revenue for the payment of the bonus may be derived. We have suggested the formation of associations within your existing organizations to exert pressure upon the political parties to get what you want. We do not anticipate that either party will adopt this policy. But already there is a party in the field, the Single Tax Party, with organizations in a dozen States, pledged to the taking of the rent of land for public purposes.

You can take advantage of this instrument at hand, get into this party, and officer it with men faithful to your purposes.

You are to be warned against those in your own organization who even now show a tendency to accept what appears to be inevitable—the refusal of the Republican administration to consider any means at all for the payment of the bonus. This inclination on the part of some of your leaders may arise from want of knowledge that a source of payment can be opened to you, or it may come from the more ignoble motive of ambition for political preferment. But whatever the motive, you will overcome all possible machinations that may be attempted to defeat your purposes by joining the Single Tax Party and making the bonus demand out of the ground rent one of its integral principles.

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO A SHARE IN THE LAND RENT

Senator Myers has said in the Senate that this offer of a bonus is "an invitation to the ex-soldiers to put their hands in the treasury." If so, theirs will not be the only hands in the Treasury; some infinitely dirtier hands are already there, deep to the arm-pits. Not the arms of honest soldiers that shouldered guns in time of the nation's need, but the claw-like hands of the profiteering birds of prey, chief of whom, though least regarded because the least obtrusive, the rent lords of the land. The loot is myriad-handed. And let Senator Myers refrain from condemning the ex-soldiers for thinking the services they rendered the country are worthy of recompense. They are, and if recompensed in the way we suggest, criticism of the sort Senator Myers makes is disarmed, for they have a right to share in the rent of the country they have saved. Let them say, "Pay us our bonus out of the land rent of the country we fought for." And then let them organize to get it.

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

Regulation versus Freedom

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SAMUEL UNTERMYER

HON. SAMUEL UNTERMYER,

DEAR SIR:

My admiration of the ability with which you have conducted the public's case and the results already achieved, cause me to regard you as a practical minded man. Hence I wonder if you can be serious in proposing to remedy the evils which you have been exposing by the creation of a State Board of Control. I am moved to parody the old lines:

"Big boards have little boards
Upon their backs to bite 'em,
And these boards have other boards,
And so, ad infinitum."

Has the experience of the public in attempting to regulate monopolies been such that you can have any confidence in its success in a complex case like the present one?

Is not the centripetal force in modern business among both employers and employees so strong that centralization must go on, unless you can set up an equally powerful natural force to counteract it? And do you think that a State Board will do it?

I might refer to the scheme as socialistic, but we have already gone so far in that direction that one new government interference, more or less, will not count one way or the other. I don't criticise it because it is socialistic, but because it will not work.

If you could show the workman how to make a decent living without his union, he wouldn't belong except in rare cases. If the employer could stay in business without "belonging" he wouldn't either. Both of these are compelled by a power external to themselves. If you could determine what this pressure is you might find an effective remedy, but otherwise I fear disappointment awaits your plan.

Now what drives the laborer is not hard to see. He has no right to be in the world at all, except such as he can buy by selling his labor, and he pays for permission to live on the installment plan just as he buys his furniture, and when he ceases to make payments the people who are able to sell him permission to live take it back, just as the installment man takes back his unpaid-for furniture. So it is easy to see why he goes into a union and stays there. It is the custodian and protector of his job, and his job in the last analysis is the most precious thing in the world, for on it his life and the life of his family depend.

Now the ordinary employer is in much the same plight, and he knows that unless he clings to his association he, too, will lose his meal-ticket, and he, like his employee, does things he knows to be mean, contemptible and unworthy; while listening to you holding up some of these worthies to scorn, I wondered whether you would have done any differently had you been in their shoes.

Now do you really think your Board of Control is going to materially affect this situation? You simply can't. You are only proposing it because you can't think of anything else. There *is* a way out, but you do not seem conscious of it—a way of emancipation both to employer and employee from the *impasse* in which both find themselves. If this way were open, then the man who acted meanly, cruelly or oppressively might properly be pilloried for his acts. But at present his freedom of action is as circumscribed as was the freedom of contract before even the courts began to make fun of it.

At present a man owning no land upon which he can live and work, must find an employer or starve. But no man is under any recognized moral or legal obligation to employ him. True he may throw himself on the State, which treats him as a semi-criminal on the quite fanciful ground that if he sought work he could find it. Clearly this state of pauperism is beset with so many penalties and disadvantages that men fly from it even to the point of suicide. The spectre of penury is the most hideous