

over our ports, "protecting" us from imports of cheap food, to grasp the folly of this suggestion. But it is to the land purchase proposals that the strongest exception must be taken.

How many acres would be likely to be affected? What would be the approximate cost of the scheme? How would the value of such land be determined? Would the cost be met out of current taxation—and if so which taxes would be increased?—or by inflationary methods? Or would it be added to the national debt? These and similar questions which flood into the reader's mind are blandly ignored. Evidently the "Challengers" do not think them important. Their silence is significant. *We* challenge *them* to answer.

Rent-boosting measures listed include cheap credit facilities, guaranteed prices, assured markets, extra capital for buildings, drainage and water supply schemes. All would result in higher taxes, dearer food, richer landowners. Only those farmers who are also landowners and tenant farmers on long leases would benefit. Entry into the industry would become even more difficult and expensive than Labour's 1947 Agriculture Act has already made it.

#### "Eviction Encourages Efficient Farming"

Farmers would pay dearly for what is ironically described as "security." "The community has a right to expect that each farmer will pull his weight in the drive for higher output," remarks *Challenge to Britain*. They would be chivvied and chased from pillar to post by County Agricultural Committees, which would be strengthened and encouraged to use their existing powers more fully.

For each district a standard output per acre based on the production of farms within the district would be determined. A farmer who failed to achieve the "norm" demanded would be subject to supervision and inspection. If, after a given period during which he would receive help from the Agricultural Advisory Service, he failed to improve substantially, "the farmer may lose his farm—but only after he has exercised his right of appeal to the Land Tribunal." And then these dollar-crazed protectionists who talk blithely from time to time of moral and spiritual ideals, freedom and justice, utter the final insult. The possibility of being torn from his home and the land he has farmed all his life—and perhaps his family for generations before him—it is suggested, is in the farmer's own interest. "Labour believes such a system will help the County Committees, and the farmer, to do their jobs more efficiently." Thus might a slave holder have concluded a dissertation on the value of the whip: it helped the foreman and the slave do their jobs more efficiently in the interests of greater production!

#### Farming in a Free Society

Compare this rural conscription with the conditions that would obtain within a free economy. Relieved of all taxes on production, liberated from vexatious interference and in competition with the oversea producer, the individual farmer guided by the demand of the consumer in the market place would be free to exercise his judgment as to the type and quality of food for which his land is best suited. His dealings with the State would be confined to the annual payment of the full unimproved value of the portion of the national heritage that he held. Absolute security for himself and his successors would be ensured subject only to this regular annual payment. In such circum-

stances who can envisage the holder of *good* land—allowed to retain the full value of his labour—producing less than the maximum his land would yield? Where is the man who would break his back or dissipate his earnings farming on bleak Exmoor or half way up a Scottish mountain?

*Challenge to Britain* should be read by all thoughtful men and women. Those who cherish the concept of equal freedom for all based on the indispensable conditions of land value taxation, full free trade and a sound, convertible currency will gain from it a new strength and determination to advance these noble aims. Those who qualify their support for freedom will surely re-examine and reject those qualifications. And is it too much to hope that those others who have accepted the sedulous "freedom to starve" propaganda (which fraudulently pretends that landlordism and monopoly capitalism are synonymous with economic freedom) will awaken to the deception in time?

We hope that the Margate Conference next month will reject this authoritarian programme and instruct the Executive to draw up a new one worthy of the Party and of the nation.

P. R. S.

#### TO HIM THAT HATH

By H. E. Salisbury, Pittsburg, Kansas

All tax acts of government may be classified as progressive or recessive. They either tend toward an equal distribution of benefits and burdens, or they favour the upper income groups. Truly the land-value tax proposal is a progressive tax. It is just, in that it favours all equally. Taxes on production are regressive in nature, and are therefore unjust. They are class legislation.

It is a commonly held and wide-spread conception here in the United States that incomes in the higher brackets are more heavily taxed than those in the lower income groups. Actually the very reverse is true. The tendency of our tax burdens is regressive, and that tendency during the past thirty years has been accelerated. Congress entertains and passes new tax legislation which is disproportionate between the lower and higher income groups. Exemptions for the lower income classes are constantly lowered and the tax rates raised, while poorly-written and unjust laws allow the rich to escape. Some of these gates are being closed, but the scheming and conniving continues at a merry rate.

Our present laws are "slanted" in favour of the "haves." Fixed percentages of profits are made more secure by passing on a large portion of excise and sales taxes to the consumer, thus weakening his purchasing power and it has been found impossible to get a law through our Congress that will touch this practice. It is universally admitted that sales and excise taxes are weighted against the thousand dollar and less income groups.

Here it is a common cost accounting practice to include the various tax burdens before the profit percentage is computed, thereby taking a profit on taxes. This militates heavily against the consumption of our production. What to do? Steps must be taken to establish a free market. To do this we should lower and finally remove all tariffs and other production taxes, both hidden and direct, that discourage trade between the nations and hamper and shackle internal markets everywhere. An ample land-value tax must be enacted that will provide for the collection of the economic rent of land, the social earning of the community.

Regardless of the needs of government, production should never be touched until this social earning is taken.

The present terrible times that seem to defy solution have given us pause. Our economists are looking for parallels in the records of the past. We are beginning to realise that if we fail in finding the basic answer, our civilization faces disintegration. For us, the historic past holds the full story of the problem and its solution.

When we read—

“Let men be on their guard against men who flatter and mislead the multitude. Of the tyrant, spies and informers are the principal instruments. War is his favourite occupation, for the sake of engrossing the attention of the people, and making himself necessary to them as their leader. An unbridled democracy is exactly similar to a tyranny. It is always anxious to lord it like a sovereign; it therefore has its flatterers in the shape of demagogues. Ancient customs must be done away with; ancient ties, civil and sacred, must be broken; everything must be changed according to new and false theories; and the result is an assimilation of democratic to tyrannical government, in its habits and modes of action.”

—we wonder who the author may have been. We suspect, perhaps it was Biddle, or Roosevelt, or Wallace, or could it have been Dewey, or Byrd, or Bricker, or someone defending our form of government?

When we are told that the author was Aristotle and it was written in 384 B.C., we are astounded. Thus we learn our problems are not new. We are beginning to realise their seriousness and it has caused us to stop and to look and shortly we shall listen. When we listen we shall learn the simplicity of the solution. And it will have to do with the establishment of justice.

### LAND TENURE IN TONGA

The Coronation visit to Britain paid by Queen Salote of Tonga caused considerable interest in her little-known South Sea island Kingdom.

The social and economic conditions which once prevailed in Tonga—and, we hope, still obtain to-day—are incidentally described in the informative and delightful travel book *Two Young Men See the World*, published in 1934 by Geo. Allen & Unwin. Consisting of letters written by the authors, Stanley Unwin and Severn Storr during a journey they made in 1912 to various parts of Africa, Australia and Asia, the book affords an intimate picture of their experiences and of the many places visited. Social conditions were investigated and are recorded in a genial fashion with no attempt to preach or dogmatise, or make propaganda. So we are made familiar with the happy people of the Friendly Islands and the all-satisfying cause of their contentment, indicating how the civilized nations of Europe would be blest a thousand-fold if their peoples, with their vastly greater powers of production, stood in relation to one another as land animals, as do these people of the South Seas; each established with his right to the use of land, each enjoying that “freedom from want” which prevails and can only prevail in the absence of the institution that makes private property of the rent of land:—

“Perhaps the most interesting and instructive thing about Tonga is its land system. No land can be bought, nor can land be sold. Not a single acre in any of the principal islands is alienated. Europeans or outsiders requiring land for any purpose can lease it, but that is all. A lease, in most cases, is for fifty years, but in the

neighbourhood of any town or village it is for twenty-one years only. The land is the people's and they have a very effective way of dealing with it. Nominally it is divided out amongst the King or Queen and the big chiefs, but every youth on becoming a taxpayer (*i.e.*, on payment of the £2 poll-tax, to which every male over sixteen years of age is liable) is entitled to a plot of land from his chief, sufficient to support himself and family. The amount to which he is actually entitled is about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres, but owing to a lack of proper surveys it has often exceeded this quantity. It has been found that  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres is sufficient to keep a Tongan family in comfort, and if the holder cares to prepare copra (dried coco-nut) he can make a very pleasant cash income besides. Over and beyond this  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres, every taxpayer is entitled to a small plot of land in his village on which to build his *abi* or native hut. Only the surplus lands, above what is required for the foregoing purposes, may be leased by the chiefs, or even the Queen, to outsiders; but there is a slight tendency already creeping in for chiefs to consider their rent roll more than the needs of their vassals. Any abuses of this sort are dealt with by the Minister of Lands, whose duty it is to see that all tax-payers receive the plot of land which is due to them on arriving at the age of sixteen. The chiefs were entitled at the time of our visit to a nominal yearly payment of about 4s. from each of those to whom they allot land, but this is seldom inflicted; its equivalent is, however, often paid in a different way. If, for instance, a chief is going through a district he sends word beforehand and preparations are made for his entertainment (Page 366).

“As we rose to go the most important natives present came and shook hands with us in a most friendly and natural way. Everyone is independent in Tonga, and there is a dignity about the bearing of the people which independence brings (Page 370).

“They had whiled away most of the night in song; in fact, the Tongan is always singing, and well he may, for, as far as we could see, his lot is a particularly happy one (Page 375).

“As our mounted escort led us along the track to the coastal scene of rock and cliff and waving palms, he carried on a long conversation with us. ‘Is it a fact,’ he asked, ‘that there are people in England who have no food nor clothes? How can this be? Is not England a great and wealthy country?’

“To the Tongan mind such a state of affairs is incredible, and such questions are not easy to answer except to point out that in olden times the land of England was held much as the land of Tonga is to-day, but that the kings and chiefs at home have abused their power and kept the land for themselves instead of holding it in trust for the people to use. It made us feel what a lot we have to learn from Tonga.” (Page 385).

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