

NO one has a higher regard for Mr. Holmes than the editor of LAND AND FREEDOM. But we nevertheless disagree with him and do not think that he has thought through on the matter of land and machinery. Every machine is drawn from the land, and this is elementary. If labor is free to apply itself to land, machines can be multiplied many fold. The man who owns machinery cannot make it pay without placing it in the hands of labor to cooperate with it. He cannot hold it idle and expect to reap a return. He cannot charge more for its use than his competitor demands—he is forced to a reasonable demand by others owning like machinery. And with labor free to apply itself to natural resources, machinery or capital must pay the wages demanded in a free market. This cannot be less than what the laborer could earn if he owned the machinery. All the owner of capital can extract from production is that part of the product which is interest upon his capital. He cannot take any part of the wages of his employes—the bidding of capital for the labor of those who work for wages will determine that automatically.

“WHY not put the two things together?” Mr. Holmes asks naively. That is, the Single Tax which concerns itself with the land, and socialism which concerns itself with machinery. The answer is because there is no limit to the production of machinery which comes from land and because its ownership is not a monopoly. A man may hold his machinery idle. But it rots, while land is perpetual. Land yields gold fish and locomotives, and it does both by the same process—the application of labor to it. And because on land and from land all products are brought forth, because a needle and a Mergenthaler machine are capital, and capital must have the cooperation of human labor, there is no way by which socialism can “handle it”—to use Mr. Holmes’ curious phrase. He confuses the natural and normal relations, in which capital is the servant of labor and in the absence of labor, or lacking its cooperation, the most helpless thing in the world. In a society where labor is not conscripted under compulsion, as it is where land is privately controlled, capital takes its proper place as associate of labor in the work of production. But this is true only where land is free.

* * *

IN short, the American people have failed to see the essential injustice of private property in land, because as yet they have not felt its full effects. This public domain—the vast extent of land yet to be reduced to private possession, the enormous common to which the faces of the energetic were always turned, has been the great fact that, since the days when the first settlements began to fringe the Atlantic Coast, has formed our national character and colored our national thought.

—PROGRESS AND POVERTY.

Causerie

BY THOMAS N. ASHTON

THE STATE OF THE UNION

AND the President “shall from time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the Union.” But the President is very busy this morning, so we’ll give him a hand at this most simple task. Anybody can inform the Congress of the state of the Union by simply picking up the morning’s issue of any metropolitan daily, consequently your reporter is exceedingly well posted on the aforesaid state of the aftermentioned Union. He read it in this morning’s paper.

What this country needs, sez the President himself on page 1, column 4, is new “wage and hour” legislation and six more Supreme Court Justices.

What this country needs, sez the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation on page 1, column 5, is more wages and shorter hours for labor.

What this country needs, sez the Committee on Industrial Organization (alias Mr. Lewis) is to let us “organize” the nation.

What this country needs, sez “scientific correspondent” Crowther of the *Manchester Guardian*, to Harvard University, is a class of “philosophic journalists . . . like Ben Franklin and H. G. Wells.”

What this country needs, sez Professor Ekblaw of Clark University, on the next page, column 6, is “consumer cooperatives” where there haint no “profit motive.” The six thousand souls of Mora, Sweden, haint paid no taxes “for 60 years because of its flourishing lumber industry.”

What this country needs, sez the good people of Joliet, Ill., 5 columns over, is a good, old-fashioned, nickle schooner of suds.

What this country needs, sez the Federal Trade Commission, next page, column 2, is “production credit associations” and low-rate credit.

What this country needs, sez Basil Mathews, British author and lecturer, to the cultured crania in Gardner Auditorium, Boston, is a “group of politically-conscious voters.” Well, we’ve had plenty of unconscious-politicians and captains of industry.

What this country needs, sez an army of educators from the “best schools” of the East, to the Massachusetts legislature, is the repeal of the teachers-oath-of-allegiance law.

The morning metropolitan paper thinks that is about all that this country needs today, outside of the customary grocery order, but we think that what this country needs is about one hundred million padded cells—a straight-jacket sleeping garment in each cell—a radio out of reach above each cot, governed by remote control which sends forth hourly lectures (one hour out for lunch) 365 days

each year until the patients finally recognize that $1+1=2$ in taxation as well as in law, medicine, burglary, grocery stores, church collections, and beano games.

Such is the "state of the Union" today.

KEEP WHISTLING

The National Publishers Association would convince us that we are a nation of Jack-the-giant-killers. The NPA nearly establishes the belief that we—the great American people—actually thrive on "depressions." Its apodictic plerophory indicates that we are perfectly powerful pachydermata when it comes to pulling out "depressions" by the roots.

"In 1893 stark ruin stalked through the land; 467 banks failed in a few months. Mills, furnaces and factories shut down everywhere. Bankruptcy was on every hand. America had twice as many unemployed per thousand population as she has today. But she put them all back to work."

Nonchalantly we tossed that ol' depression right over our left shoulder.

"In 1907 panic broke loose. The production of pig iron dropped 50 per cent in less than a year. All but the strongest men lost heart—"We are ruined," they declared, "recovery cannot come in our time." Yet in two years prosperity had returned."

Just like that. We flipped that one over our right shoulder.

"In 1921, when many honest and thoughtful people were predicting worse conditions, the country was already beginning to climb to the greatest era of prosperity it had ever experienced."

Phooey on "worse conditions"!

"History tells how America has fought and won nineteen major depressions."

We haint a-countin' the amateur bouts. Mark *that* if you please.

Yeah, we knock 'em down and drag e'm out like so many cornstalks in harvest-time. To us they are just so many push-overs.

Whistling in the dark never yet has hastened the dawn. Whistling never yet has replaced a burnt-out fuse. But it is so easy to whistle while waiting—much easier than searching, scrutinizing, striving to learn how, when and where the house-lights were short-circuited. It requires less effort to park oneself on the handiest spot and wait for Nature to dispel the darkness by bringing the dawn.

"Prosperity always comes back"—as does the dawn, so all we need to do is to wait for it. Be patient. "Have faith." But under no circumstances should we use our brains.

Keep whistling.

It is odd that we smart-guys can toss depressions around like ten-cent teacups, yet we are not smart enough to find out their cause and then act.

BRASS-KNUCKLE BENEVOLENCE

During three hundred years the people of this nation have bestowed, annually or biennially, upon their legislatures full authority to wield the brass-knuckles of taxation upon the hapless heads of individuals and associations. Each and every rise in prosperity was under thermostatic control which released the brass-knuckles of ability-to-pay and to rain down blows upon the pates of the producers of wealth—until prosperity was beaten to its knees time and again.

Such procedure eventually wrecks the body and spirit of the most rugged individual and his associates.

The brass-knuckle statesmen came to realize, after having successfully again beaten down prosperity in 1929, that resuscitative measures were in order. The victim's bounce-back elasticity was weakening, consequently the brass-knuckle brains in legislative halls hastened to administer first-aid by establishing the corporate entity known as the Reconstruction Finance Corporation endowed with fifty millions of dollars which had been brass-knuckled out of tax-payers who now had come to be the recipients of brass-knuckle benevolence.

Added to the fifty million dollar endowment was legislative authority to water these \$50,000,000 until they blossomed into \$200,000,000 worth of credit to be distributed among the brass-knuckle victims in part.

From those victims who succeeded in producing more wealth, above their needs, repayment was expected by the brass-knuckle benefactors. Those who failed to produce surplus wealth were relieved of their immediate obligation by the bouncing of brass-knuckles on the heads of fellowmen who had not yet succumbed to previous brass-knuckle ability-to-pay.

To the \$200,000,000 resuscitation kitty of the RFC was added the \$125,000,000 Federal Land Bank pepper-upper—a measure designed to re-energize the circulatory stream of currency by methods of transfusion. Despite all the benevolence instituted in the early days of the depression, five leading farm commodities declined 48.3 per cent—non-agricultural commodities declined 59.1 per cent—rail stocks dropped 81.8 per cent—34 utility stocks sank 72.1 per cent—U. S. steel fell off 84.9 per cent—and copper and brass relapsed 90.5 per cent.

These percentages are quoted "to refute the frequent charge of the Democrats that the Republican party seeks first to "brass-knuckle agriculture before similarly treating "the manufacturers and the securities markets."

The brass-knuckle benevolent act of 1929—the agricultural marketing act—"never has had the opportunity for successful operation" because the depression too soon fell with a swoop. Lacking this strong-arm benevolence, 500 new co-operative marketing associations made "an increase in the volume of business approximating \$100,000,000" in the total of \$2,400,000,000.