

CORRESPONDENCE

A WORD OF THANKS

Cook's Hill, Mundesley,
1st September, 1920.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

Every month I read *LAND & LIBERTY* I feel inclined to write and congratulate you upon it, so now at length I actually am putting pen to paper to do the deed, as I know encouragement is often helpful. What I chiefly marvel at from month to month is the skill with which you cater for the varied requirements of your readers. No month passes without several columns at least appearing to set the mind of the new reader going. You present him with the basic principles of our gospel with ever fresh force. Yet you always find plenty of matter to interest the initiated and supply him with ample pabulum for discussion and propaganda. Your pages are never without facts garnered from all over the world, nor practical points for the application of our principles to the complications of present day society. With all this you somehow find space not only for reports of important parliamentary debates, and of the conferences and other doings of the various leagues, but you also contrive to give us news of the progress of the movement the world over. As time passes, events demand, and opportunities present themselves, I have no doubt you will deal more than you have done in the past, in your usual lucid style, with the abuses and evils attaching to national debts and public borrowing, and with the harassing interference of state officials, and that you will show how intimately such things are wrapped up with the private appropriation of the rent of land values and with the consequential burdensome and obnoxious methods of raising taxes. Proof of the positive evils of our present system of taxation is in these times as necessary as pointing to the way of justice and of the true law of property. Exactly how, where, and why the evils so glibly termed "the Capitalist system" arise out of the private ownership of Nature's resources wants, I think, rather more frequent demonstration, if I may make a minor criticism.

LAND & LIBERTY makes a wide and strong appeal in a noble cause. I hope your efforts, Mr. Editor, will meet with the success they deserve through an ever larger circulation; and with my warm thanks to you for them,

Yours sincerely,

S. V. PEARSON, M.D.

GET RID OF THE DRONES

Edinburgh, 10th September, 1920.

SIR,

Surely there never was a time when so many false prophets were about, and so many false "profits" made; people striving to improve their condition by joining in the game of grab. I began political effort with the belief that a man should have the reward of his labour and that he could only get that by seeing that the tolls were abolished and the toll-takers converted into workers of some sort; now the doctrine that a man is entitled to live and be paid whether he works or no has the field.

I am deaved with the programmes of Coalitionists and Labour men whose remedy is to get those in houses to pay half the cost of building houses for those who have none. I suppose Liberals are as bad; but there aren't any about here who are articulate, and so I don't know. We have to get back to basic truths and to tell folk if they

want houses they must pay for them, and to do so they must earn enough to exchange for them; and before they can manage that they will have to see that those do nothing but set up toll-bars are prevented from doing so. . . . And so back to the old stand and the good cause.

I am just working away putting in a word where I can and boring holes in false proposals by way of clearing the ground. Some day we may have a government of one kind or another, but I do not see any one giving a strong lead among the organized parties. The present office-holders seem to have no principles, but only a determination to save the country by preventing others from getting their hands into affairs. The Labour men have followed their example and are only concerned for the advantage of their sectional interests.

But I do not think that the great mass of our fellow-citizens are represented by the talkers. There is a soundness of heart that keeps us alive in spite of poison gas; and I am glad that you and your colleagues hold fast the faith and proclaim it in the belief that when the dust subsides and the noise diminishes the truth will be seen and heard and will prevail.

Yours, etc., D.

LAND VALUES TAXATION IN CANADA: THE ALLEGED "FAILURE"

157, Maryland Street, Winnipeg.
26th August, 1920.

SIR,

The paragraph in your July article *re* speculative borrowing just about covers the tax difficulties of municipalities in Western Canada. All these tax difficulties arose from a land speculation, which accompanied a period of remarkable development previous to 1913. During this period new towns were being born almost daily, and all these towns were expected by their first residents to become important centres. Miles of territory surrounding these towns and young cities were subdivided into lots and sold to eager purchasers, who were to become rich through the growth of population. Tremendous debts, in proportion to resources, were incurred in the rivalry to boost these towns. In some cases speculators controlled the local councils and spent borrowed money to boost land values by carrying local improvements to outside subdivisions. Under such conditions, land value taxation, even where it constituted the whole or the bulk of the local revenue, as in the case of Edmonton and Vancouver, was altogether too low materially to check the speculation. Nothing short of the Single Tax, which would have taken the full rental value, would have prevented speculation and inflation under such conditions.

When the bubble, inflated to the limit, burst, the debt remained. It was easy to collect taxes on vacant subdivisions, enormously inflated in value, as long as the prices continued to advance and the speculative buying to continue, but very different when this abnormal condition vanished. It then became a question of getting revenue any way possible to meet liabilities, regardless of the means. Sales of lands for taxes were in many cases deferred in the hope that the situation would improve and values come back at least to some extent. This accounts for the large amount of uncollected taxes. Notwithstanding the enormity of the inflation, our towns and cities are pulling together and gradually overcoming the difficulties placed upon them by land speculation.

It is, of course, nonsense to talk about the Single Tax having failed. Only one who is very ignorant of the situation could say or think anything of the kind. The fact is, that nothing short of the Single Tax could have saved this country from the experience of the land "boom" and the burdensome result thereof.

Land speculation was not only greatly facilitated by unreasonable railway construction, but also the land speculation was largely responsible for the construction of thousands of miles of, at present, unnecessary railways. A new district would be opened up by railway construction, and in a little while the land would be gobbled up by speculators and the prices of land so advanced by speculation that it would be thought necessary to open up more land to provide cheaper land within the means of settlers. Our stupid legislators went on bonusing and assisting railways only to keep up the supply of land to be speculated in. Thus to-day we have 100,000,000 acres of land in the three provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) owned speculatively, while less than 30,000,000 acres are held by occupants. Railway promoters were themselves large land speculators. The Single Tax would have consolidated settlement, restricted railway construction to reasonable requirements, and prevented speculation.

Mayor Clark, of Edmonton, recently elected on the Single Tax ticket, can tell you that taxation had nothing to do with the financial troubles of that city. He says that they "simply spent money like drunken sailors." This was the situation in practically all of our towns and cities, and more particularly in the newer cities, regardless of the mode of raising local revenues.

Sincerely yours,
D. W. BUCHANAN.

THE AUSTRALIAN LAND TAX

556, William Street, Perth, West Australia.
July 5th.

DEAR SIR,

In the May issue of your esteemed paper one or two errors occur in an article on "The Land Value of Australia." You quote Knibb's "Private Wealth of Australia," and say that land values in Australia amount to £455,000,000, of which £200,000,000 is owned by residents, who are subject to the Federal Land Tax. You go on to state that the difference, viz., £255,000,000, "indicates how much land value in Australia is exempted from the Federal Land Tax owing to the £5,000 limit."

This does not make the position clear. Unfortunately the iniquitous £5,000 exemption is carried right through up to £80,000, when it ceases. Thus, if a person owns land to the value of £5,001, he is taxed only on £1. If he owns land to the value of £80,000 he is taxed on £75,000. An absentee owner has no exemption. Of the amount of 200 millions of estates of £5,000 and over, no less than £70,000,000 is exempted, through the operation of the ridiculous system of exemption and graduation.

The word "thousand" in the tenth line of the second column, page 393, should be omitted.

Wishing you and the cause every success,

Yours, etc.,

J. P. DOHENY, Hon. Sec.,
Free Trade and Land Values League.

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is an invitation to become a subscriber

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A TEACHER'S RELIGION

4, William Street,
Penrith, Cumberland.

September 22nd, 1920.

DEAR SIR,

I was thoroughly glad to read the "challenge" by the Rev. V. T. Pomeroy. The "liberation of the land" has been my religion for some years. A teacher, I expound the grand doctrine to 200 boys; urging them to exercise their minds that they may become capable of understanding the great sore that undermines the vitality of mankind; and to know what it is to fight for a glorious cause. It is God's work. No other more so! I never attend Church. I consider it would be a waste of my time. But I should be proud to pass under the lintel on which was carved: "The Henry George Freelanders' Church."

T. H. POSTLETHWAITE.

NOTES AND NEWS

The Rev. P. J. Joyce writes to the GLASGOW HERALD of August 12th as follows:—

THE MIXED SLEEPERS OF AYRSHIRE

While Councillor Donald Clark, of Tonbridge, shocked by the mixed bathers of Bournemouth, is seeking refuge in the newspaper press, what would appear to be a still more shocking phenomenon is escaping notice in the Ayrshire coast. In one bedroom, not indeed one suited to the requirements of the woman of fashion, for it is a mere barn, ten girls sleep on beds of straw, having a line of seed boxes one foot and a half high to protect their feet from contact with the feet of eight men and boys who sleep on the other side of this barrier in the same room. Excepting the modesty of Irish eyes there is no other screen. In another sleeping apartment in Ayrshire of the rich potato farms and orchards and golf links fifty men and girls find sleeping accommodation. On those standardised beds of straw the men sleep on one side of the long cold floor. In this instance the heads of the sleeping men are separated from the heads of the sleepers of the other sex by thin stone flags about 3 ft. high running along the centre of the room. For these half a hundred workers, boys and girls, there is no dining-room, no sitting-room, but only this bedroom, which is made to serve the purpose of three rooms. Now, sir, there is a "1919 Housing Act" which has special provisions for the deliverance of those helpless seasonal workers. There is a Board of Health at Princes Street, Edinburgh, empowered to have this Act enforced. I ask, What in the name of Western civilisation is the Board of Health doing at Princes Street, Edinburgh, while the purest girls in the world are condemned to the danger not of mixed bathing, but of mixed sleeping in Ayrshire?

Probably never in the history of Scottish agriculture have landowners obtained such high prices for crofts, farms, and allotments as they are doing at the present time. At the sale of holdings on the Cairness estate, near Fraserburgh, the other day, for example, one croft of 20½ acres at a rental of £27 was sold for £750, or about 28 years' rent. Another croft of 15½ acres at £21 rent fetched £620, or 29½ years' rent. Other crofts and farms brought 19, 20, and 25 years' rent. Two of the purchasers of holdings were fishermen from St. Combes. In pre-war days 14 to 16 years' rent was regarded as quite a good price for farm land.—
"Edinburgh Evening News," August 7th.