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EDITORIAL

Perkins' Diagnosis.

An excellent comment on economic conditions in the United States was offered by George W. Perkins to the Commission on Industrial Relations, when he said:

Anyone approaching this country in an airship and looking down on it and seeing our great fertile fields and rich mines and the comparatively small population, and then seeing the number of unemployed—the number of people who are not employed as they should be—would think this was a lunatic asylum.

But what would this airship navigator think, were he informed that the man, who made the statement quoted, solemnly insists that this state of affairs is due to the Sherman law and “unscientific” tariff revision?

S. D.

Building Up a Department.

It must be a source of some consolation to the friends of Louis F. Post who have heard his recent addresses, to know that he occupies a place where his peculiar talent is devoted to constructive work. Keenly as these friends feel the loss of his counsel, as it appeared from week to week in the columns of *The Public*, they are now coming to understand how that counsel is being translated into deeds. Had Mr. Post gone into an old department, with well-established lines of procedure, he would have been greatly handicapped in his efforts toward constructive reform. Going as he did into a new department, however, where all is undefined and indefinite, and where the very act creating the department must be interpreted, it is the country's peculiar good fortune that it has the assistance of such a man to aid in the interpretation.

When Congress divided the Department of Commerce and Labor into the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor, it said: “The purpose of the Department of Labor shall be to

foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States, to improve their working conditions, and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment." Here are provisions so indefinite, yet so broad, that they may mean very little, or very much, according as they are interpreted. Secretary William B. Wilson, at the head of the Department, has shown himself to be clear-minded and broad enough to grasp the new ideas of government. With Mr. Post as his assistant and confidant, those striving for the new order may rest assured that the plans now under consideration are such as will give force to the movement to "foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States, to improve their working conditions, and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment."

s. c.

The Unemployed Problem.

Committees on unemployment have been appointed in many cities. If any one of them has shown itself competent to deal with the question the fact has not been reported. While no legal power to forcibly remove the cause of unemployment can be wielded by a municipal committee, much can be done by men, who know how, to call public attention to the cause and to arouse a strong sentiment against efforts to block removal. Unemployment is due to withholding of natural resources from use. Nothing else can cause it in a country capable of producing enough to support in comfort the population of the world. In every city where unemployment committees exist there is enough land withheld from use to furnish potential jobs for all of the unemployed whose plight has called these committees into existence. Yet the committees seem blind.

But while committees may be blind there are interested persons outside of their membership who can see, and are trying to furnish light. In Cleveland, for instance, the following comment was offered by Mr. A. B. du Pont, treasurer of the Joseph Fels Fund, on a suggestion offered by the local committee:

Mr. F. H. Goff, chairman, the Mayor's Committee on Non-employment, City.

Dear Mr. Goff: Any plan that will relieve the distress of the unemployed of our city has my hearty sympathy and I am pleased with the suggestion of the Committee of which you are chairman, to invite the workers of Cleveland who are employed to contribute a day's pay, whether it be large or small, to a fund to employ those who are out of work.

I wish to suggest that your Committee also invite

each Cleveland landowner to contribute for the same purpose an amount equal to the rental value for one day of their land.

The present value of all the land within the city limits of Cleveland is estimated by Tax Commissioner Fackler at \$600,000,000.00 which, rented at 6 per cent of its value will produce each day (not counting Sundays and holidays, days when most workers receive no pay), \$120,000.00.

I deem it most fitting that the landowners be urged to contribute the amount indicated for the reason that this \$120,000.00 that each and every day, our land laws permit them to appropriate, is produced by the workers of Cleveland, and upon the day that they are invited to contribute a day's wage to the fund for the unemployed, they also will be forced to contribute this \$120,000.00 to the landowners.



Chicago's municipal director of unemployment, James W. Calley, apparently sees more than the average official who deals with that question. He is said to be planning to put the vacant lot cultivation idea into operation. Mr. Calley is quoted in the Tribune as follows:

Think of all the land within the city limits that lies idle year after year—and of the use it might be put to. Some of the tracts are amply large to grow a considerable crop of some cereal. Others are large enough to raise considerable quantities of garden truck. The experience of the country school pupils in raising different forms of produce on small tracts of land throughout Cook county is proof that a little land may be made to yield considerable profit.

How to get possession of the land is a problem that bothers Mr. Calley. He sees no other way than asking permission of the owners. Some land can be obtained in this way. But experience in other cities shows that owners who will give such permission are comparatively few. Experience shows also that when some owners begin to see that there is back of this plan a Singletax object lesson they revoke the permission. In view of this fact it would be well for Mr. Calley, and those interested in the unemployment problem in other cities, to consider carefully the following suggestion submitted by the Philadelphia Singletax Society to the city councils:

In view of the distress caused by the involuntary disemployment of thousands of worthy citizens, this society requests that you consider the desirability of requesting all owners of unused land within the city limits to place it at the disposal of the Vacant Lots Cultivation Society to be prepared for use in the spring. We are informed that the German municipalities have commandeered much vacant land for this purpose, but a simple request from the city authorities should be sufficient to accomplish much good, without the danger of pauperization, the work of this Society having been eminently useful, highly productive and non-pauperizing. Moreover we suggest that you appoint a committee to confer with the