

Mr. R. F. Powell, the superintendent of the Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association, in presenting his eighth annual report to the Board of Directors, says:

Each year's experience confirms the fact that the best and most effective way of helping people in need is to open a way whereby they may help themselves. Eight years is a brief span in a great city's life, yet during this short space of time our association has made eight demonstrations of the following facts:

1st. That many people out of employment must have help of some kind.

2d. That a great majority of them prefer self-help, and many will take no other. Nearly all are able and willing to improve any opportunity open to them, especially if advised how to put opportunity to good use.

3d. That opening opportunities to them does not pauperize or degrade them, but has the opposite effect. It establishes self-respect and self-confidence.

4th. That the offering of Vacant Lot Gardens to the unemployed, with proper supervision and some assistance and instruction, is the cheapest and best way yet devised for opening up opportunities.

5th. It possesses advantages in addition to the main purpose of providing profitable employment—such as the health, self-respect and exertion of those engaged.

The Vacant Lots Cultivation system is a school where the workers are taught a trade, to most of them a new trade—farming which offers more opportunity for employment than all other trades, and less outlay of capital is required to start and maintain the work than in any other field of productive opportunity. The greatest advantage of all is that the idle men and idle land are linked together.

The applicant is allowed a garden on condition that it is cultivated well throughout the season, and the holder does not trespass upon his neighbors. He must respect their right to what their labor produces. A failure to observe these rules forfeits his privilege.

"During the eight years of Vacant Lot work in Philadelphia more than four thousand families have been assisted, many old people who could no longer keep up the rapid pace of our industrial life, cripples whose physical condition held them back in the race for work, persons who on account of sickness or other misfortunes have been thrown out through competition and forced to join the ranks of the unemployed, have had a chance opened to them."

Another main purpose of the association has been not only to open opportunities to men but to teach them how to use these opportunities to the best advantage. Viewed from this standpoint the work has each year shown satisfactory results.

Out of nearly eight hundred gardeners who were assisted last season, more than eighty-five either rented or secured the loan of gardens this season on their own account, and cultivated them at their own expense, while the number of gardens forfeited on account of poor cultivation or trespassing was only three out of seven hundred and fifty-six.

This strong tendency to take up the work on their own account is the best proof of the effectiveness of the work in establishing self-respect and self-confidence.

An important step was taken early in the spring, a nine acre tract was secured. Sixteen families took it over. They had the land thoroughly fertilized and

plowed, and then sub-divided. Some took separate allotments as under the Vacant Lots Association's plan, and others worked for the manager at an agreed rate of wages per hour. The whole nine acres has been thoroughly well cultivated, and a magnificent crop harvested.

As soon as there was produce for sale a splendid market was established on the ground and a regular delivery system organized. . . .

The Philadelphia effort after ten years' existence is still being successfully maintained. . . .

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In these days when things are judged from a money value standpoint, it is not surprising that this somewhat sordid test should be applied, even to an effort of this description, though it is not a proper one. The commercial value of a thousand bricks is easily given, but the value of a thousand men and women cannot be ascertained by any £ s. d. calculation. The rescuing of men, women and children from the suffering, and want, anxiety and disease which unemployment involves, is a factor in the transaction which the multiplication table cannot represent.

The would be critic or reformer who stops to inquire, before approving such a plan, as to whether "it will pay"—provide a profit—is losing sight of the priceless asset represented by health, happiness and more or less independent lives, but even taken upon this basis of money value calculation, Philadelphia proves that the "Vacant Lots" effort pays.

In five years for £3,000 contributed the workers had direct benefits to the amount of nearly £17,000, and indirect benefits of immense value both to them and the community, that cannot be estimated in £ s. d.—improved health and moral tone, increased comforts for wives and children, increased happiness for all.

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LAND FAMINE AND EDUCATION OF PUBLIC OPINION.

An Address Delivered by Joseph Fels at the Annual Meeting of the University Extension Society in Philadelphia, Jan. 26, 1907.

As a practical man of affairs I have hesitated to speak at this Annual Meeting of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching. But I have long been interested in helping to change public opinion in matters that clearly demand new adjustments, and especially in those affecting the use of the land. Thus my aim, in its modest way, is the same as yours, and so I have accepted your invitation to tell you something of my personal experiences with English public opinion and the land.

My own general point of view is expressed in the following letter, written to a friend in America by Thomas Jefferson while he was traveling in France in 1785:

The property of this country is absolutely concentrated in a very few lands, having revenues of from half a million of guineas a year downwards. These employ the flower of the country as servants, some of them having as many as 200 domestics not laboring. But after all these comes the most numerous of all classes, that is, the poor, who cannot find work. I asked myself what

could be the reason so many should be permitted to beg who are willing to work in a country where there is a very considerable portion of uncultivated land. These lands are undisturbed only for the sake of game.

Whenever there is in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live in. If for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be provided to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed. It is too soon yet in our country to say that every man who cannot find employment, but who can find uncultivated land shall be at liberty to cultivate it, paying a moderate rent. But it is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small land holders are the most precious part of a state.

To these sentiments it seems to me no exception can be taken. The land, including its waters and its mines, is the basis of all wealth and the source from which every nation draws its new generations of strong men and women. In this sense it is the determining factor in all national education.

Not only the conditions of land ownership, but the whole attitude of people towards land is different in England from what it is here. With a population of about 48,000,000 people in the British Islands, four-fifths of the land is in the hands of 30,000 landlords. While some districts are densely populated, vast tracts are unoccupied and uncultivated, reserved for pleasure parks and shooting grounds. It is difficult to get at an acre of ground though it may be easier to buy 500 or 1,000 acres.

But the great difference between our land conditions and those of England is, after all, one of sentiment. The land in America is a power only so far as economic conditions are concerned, but in Great Britain it has a much larger influence. There it means not only the power which money and monopoly can always wield, but it also stands for social and political power and for civic influence. On this account the possession of land is watched and controlled with a great deal more jealousy and its transfer and entail are surrounded with more difficult laws than have yet come to prevail in America.

For instance, a man in England makes a fortune in some line of business, but his social advance is barred by the fact that he is a tradesman. If he buys a country estate of a few hundred acres and so becomes the patron of the tenants and the master of the employes on the estate, he at once rises in the scale of social position and the first step toward political power is taken. It is in this way that our own Mr. Richard Croker on his newly acquired estates in Ireland is able to crush his detractors when they try to stop his social advance by referring to his former political connections in New York. The possession of English acres often wipes out the disgrace connected with the origin of the money that bought them.

And with each year that passes the land becomes bound up with all the sentiment and feelings of the family. Many a land-poor English gentleman clings to his acres as he clings to his ancestral portraits and his family honor. In America we are just beginning this relation to the land.

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In England the leasing system is very complex. Leases extend over a hundred or more years, and they are bought and sold while the freehold ownership remains untouched. And all the laws favor the owner of the land. All buildings and improvements made by the tenant revert to the owner when the lease expires, and before the tenant leaves he must put all buildings in as good condition as they have been during the period of the lease. When the lease of a city house falls in it often costs the tenant several thousand dollars to get away.

Thus the possession of land by a few people with the high rents and improvement values acquired, has built up and perpetuated the enormous fortunes of the Dukes of Bedford and the Dukes of Westminster in London. Lord Ramsay has built up a similar fortune in agricultural lands, and during the past year he has given notice to 800 tenants, who represented generations of farmers under his father and grandfathers, to leave his lands. The county authorities are now intervening to prevent the ruin of these people.

As the people of England become more intelligent they realize that the earth is the mother of us all, and so they are agitating everywhere for some direct part in her bounty. This in a large degree accounts for the spread of socialism in England and the recent return of thirty members of the Labor Party to Parliament. This party is feared by both Liberals and Tories, and it is probable that another general election will increase its parliamentary representation to a hundred.

In my opinion the correction of the land troubles to begin with, in the socialization of land values. I maintain that, given free access to the land by the common people, with no favored classes, the best forms of socialism would follow naturally. So certain am I that the land is the basis of human welfare and development that all my social efforts in Great Britain and in America work towards the increase of the land-hunger among the people. One of the best ways to encourage this hunger in England has seemed to be through the starting of local colony schemes to train the people, and the opening up of small holdings where individuals could carry into effect what they had learned.

I began in England by purchasing outright a number of farms in different parts of the country, most of which were abandoned to pasture and sporting, and offered them to various public bodies as experiment stations. The Local Government Board, of which Walter Long, late secretary for Ireland, was then Chairman, authorized the acceptance of two of the farms free of rent or interest for three years. At the end of this time the Government might purchase the farms at their original cost, or they could turn them back on my hands if the experiment proved a failure.

The result has been that the Hollesley Bay estate of 1,300 acres in Suffolk, has now in residence 300 unemployed London men who are being trained as cultivators of the soil. The Government has just taken over and paid for this estate fifteen months before the expiration of the three years' probation.

The other farm was taken over on the same terms by the Poplar Board of Guardians representing one of the poorest and most over-crowded boroughs of London. It was taken over in the hope of showing

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Tom L. Johnson's Career

A very interesting biographical sketch of Tom L. Johnson, written by Louis F. Post, appeared in THE PUBLIC about a year ago, with portrait of Mr. Johnson accompanying, as a supplement. In view of the general public interest at this time in the work of Mr. Johnson, we would like to hear from all who may care to have extra copies of this sketch, for themselves or for distribution to others. We can make an interesting suggestion in this matter.

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how a city poorhouse could be turned into a country labor-colony. But the present Local Government Board, of which John Burns is now the Liberal chairman, has turned it into nothing better than a country poorhouse. This shows a want of the right kind of intelligence and outlook on the part of the authorities. In England as in America, there is need for the life long education, not only of the weak and the unfit, but of the leaders as well.

With one of the other farms we are working in another and further direction. We took 630 acres at Mayland, near Althorne, in Essex, fifty miles from London, and divided 25 per cent. of it into farmlets of about five acres each. On these we built well-planned and tasteful dwellings suitable for a family. Each has an outbuilding fitted for a cow or pony, pigs and poultry. Two acres of each farm garden was planted to fruit and the whole was to rent for, say £30 (\$150) per year.

Many people, especially the landlords, said I would not find tenants, that poor people did not want land and did not want to work. No advertising was done. and yet about 1,000 applications were received for the 22 small holdings now ready. Applications are still coming in, and a fair percentage from people who have a capital of at least £100 (\$500). There could not be a more conclusive demonstration that in England there is a widespread and unsatisfied hunger to get back to the land.

(In America we are moving in this same direction of land monopoly. You can buy large tracts of land easily, but small pieces are always rare and expensive.)

We have further established at Mayland a 13-acre nursery and built a large group of hot houses, where we shall grow plants, bush fruits and trees for setting out and for the market. The balance of the land has been turned into a farm intelligently managed on modern lines, as an object lesson to the small holders and to the district in general.

In all such educational movements as these the teacher is of first importance. We have fortunately secured for Mayland a man who is a practical, well-informed and enthusiastic leader. He was a Manchester printer who ten years ago brought his family his knowledge and his enthusiasm into our districts. He came with no knowledge of farming, but he mastered his difficulties, reared his family, and got control of some land. This land he is now leaving to the care of his son, who has had a college training in agriculture, while he devotes his energies to our work.

As assistants to this man we have brought over two French gardeners from the neighborhood of Paris to teach what can be done in intensive market gardening. Those who have read Kropotkin's "Fields, Factories and Workshops" will better understand the importance of this.

The educational value of such an experiment is far reaching. The individuals will be working on their own holdings under intelligent conditions. They will have good advice and will have helpful examples before them. They will naturally co-operate in buying and selling. They are drawn from a large range of activities, and so represent a wide circle of friends who will watch their fortunes with interest. Meantime, thoughtful people in England will become conscious that land has other uses than supporting fam-

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ily privileges or serving as shooting grounds, and when England becomes conscious of bad conditions she will find some way to better them.

It looks now as though this particular farm at Mayland might be used for a more direct educational purpose than those I have indicated. Professor J. J. Findlay, of Manchester University, is now considering a summer school there. Children will be taken from city centers or gathered from the surrounding country side and demonstration lessons, mainly out of doors, will be given to groups of teachers.

This is one of the best things about any form of effort that is made to educate public opinion. It attracts to itself other educational impulses and grows by natural processes of extension. This afternoon illustrates this process, for I am bringing to your university extension movement my little experience in extending thought and feeling concerning the proper use of our ancestral heritage—the Earth.

* * *

THE SONG OF THE LANDLESS MEN IN THE TOWNS.

We do not own an inch of land,
Nor never did, since life began,
For us the Universe was planned,
That each must be a landless man.

For we were born where furnace fire
Turns all the sky to ashy grey,
Where men must work until they tire
That other men may tire with play.

We have not got one inch of land—
One inch of land our lives to save,
But still the Earth-engrossing band
Must grant us at the end—a grave.

And we must keep a grateful heart,
That they who stole away our share
Have left us still a little part
Of sunshine and of common air.

'Tis true the sun is hard to view,
The sky is but a murky pall,
Still they who stole from me and you—
Be thankful—did not quite take all.

They could not steal the human will,
Nor sell within the busy mart
That dauntless soul that conquers ill—
That ever-loving human heart.

These still are ours whate'er may come,
These still are ours by day or night,
In forest glade or city slum,
And we shall conquer in their might,
—William E. A. Axon in the Millgate.

* * *

Believing that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and that under the providence of God the state is a trustee whose duty it is to enact the conditions under which these divine gifts should be used for the benefit of all, we therefore condemn the handing over of large tracts of land to individuals and corporations without attaching conditions which would prevent their being held for speculative purposes only. Whenever vested rights are not interfered with, we recommend legislation which will prevent any individual or corporation from profiting hereafter from the unearned increment in the value of land.—Report of the 1906 Committee on So-

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