

An Appeal

By HENRY J. FOLEY

I APPEAL to land reformers for the formation of clubs or forums to develop elementary thinking in the nation, and through this thinking, to produce action which will end depressions; and I suggest the following programme:

1. Reduce the reform to its elemental facts. The elemental fact of land monopoly is that it bars men from a place to work, reducing them to helplessness; and those who find employment must compete for wages against millions of starving other men, hammering wages down to the minimum.

2. Ignore fine spun theories, elaborate proofs, and side issues. The fact that men are reduced to unemployment or low wages should be enough to damn the land monopoly system.

3. Land reformers should organize to form a nucleus, to spread their gospel and to leaven the mass. At the beginning, the literature should be of the most elementary kind.

4. If men can be convinced that land monopoly is the cause of their wretchedness there should be a ready response to calls for funds necessary for the work. If the hearers can not be brought to this point it is conclusive evidence that the work has been defective. The financing of land reform in a nation by the contributions of a few enthusiasts is an impossible task.

5. The natural ally of any reformer is the man who is suffering for the reform. The ally of the land reformer is the man out of work, the man on low wages, the taxed-to-death manufacturer and business man, and every man who is living by his work instead of by privilege. In an autocracy, the poor are helpless to effect a reform, and reform is almost impossible. In a democracy these men could effect a reform at the next election if they understood the facts—if they could be induced to think. And they are the only ones who can effect a thorough-going and permanent reform. If a reform could be effected by a few men through some lucky accident without the cooperation and thinking of the majority it would be speedily upset by the next demagogue with a silver tongue. The only possible hope of permanent reform is in elemental and widespread thinking.

6. From this forum work there should be a rigid exclusion of side issues, learned excursions into higher economics, and anything beyond the facts which the people already know but have neglected to apply. There is ample room for economics and the philosophies of land reform in the colleges, and in the "land reform" schools.

7. If people are properly interested in land reform they will speedily get into action, and the nucleus of land reformers should take steps toward a broader organization. Men who are convinced that they have been banished from the earth will not be slow to advise their legis-

lators that they want their rights in the earth, not doles, relief, and regimentation.

8. Once a solidified interest has been enlisted it will be possible to have legislative bills introduced. If such bills fail of passage, a huge amount of publicity will be secured, and land reform will become a live issue.

From Editor Beckwith's *Forum*

JULY 6, 1939

ROBSON PUTS HIS WORST FOOT FORWARD AND SO LOSES CREDIT

His article in LAND AND FREEDOM is a much better article than appears on its face.

A CORRESPONDENT writes to ask what the editor makes of the article by Ray Robson, entitled "The Paramount Issue," pages 92 and 93 of LAND AND FREEDOM, for May and June.

He quoted Robson's statement:

Land is but one of the factors of production and the interference with economic freedom caused by the private appropriation of rent is but one of such interferences. Other interferences are equally unjustified and may at times be even more harmful.

He then lists the hampering of Capital by discriminatory laws, the interference with labor by ill-advised labor laws, and concludes:

Our country and the world have suffered long enough from attempts to prevent the operation of economic law, attempts made alike by the so-called friends of Labor and by the so-called, rather the self-styled economists, whose knowledge of economics is limited to a knowledge of some of the details of that science based upon no comprehension of its fundamental principles.

Those who truly understand economics know that the efforts of this class of political leaders to lead the way to a better life have only resulted in leading us into a deeper mire of depression, and that these so-called friends of Labor are really the worst enemies of the laborers as well as of society in general.

This is the first article by Robson that has come to the notice of this office. It has some splendid material. His discussion of Labor, of relief, and of natural law in the economic realm is excellent.

But that introductory paragraph alarmed the correspondent referred to; for this correspondent could see how that paragraph could derail the thought of many—perhaps of the majority of his readers.

He was completely up-set by the statement that the private appropriation of rent is "but one" of the interferences with our freedom, and that "other interferences may at times be even more harmful."

He could see that this is like saying that Atlas, the giant who stands on a turtle and carries the world on his shoulders, carries more weight than the turtle.

That reference to other interferences is most unfortunate; and the comparison of the harmful effects is a compound misfortune.

The fact of the matter is that neither Labor nor Capital would be hampered by restrictive laws, if it were not for the private appropriation of rent; nor would Labor be organized for collective bargaining if it were not for this private appropriation; nor would there be any need for relief.

It is true that the Unions and the Relief fiasco and the meddling with business by legislators and by Congress are more in evidence than the private appropriation of rent, just as Atlas might be easily seen by some who would entirely overlook the turtle on which he stands.

And, while it is true that alert students would understand Robson, it is also true that others might be misled by his statement.

Had Robson pointed out the connection between the private appro-