

The first provides that any citizen may purchase real property at its assessed value plus 10%; and the second allows the owner to save his property by accepting the increased valuation and paying a fine, as a penalty for undervaluation. Thus every fiscal value is exposed to the scrutiny of everyone looking for real estate bargains, and every landowner is impelled by the constant danger of loss to correctly value his property.

However, Art. 48 of the Morelos law is defective in two respects. First, it gives the extra 10% of a land sale to the State instead of the landowner and thus violates the Constitution; and second, the liability of the petitioner to a 5% fine (in addition to the loss of his deposit) in case of any failure to observe the technicalities of the law will be apt to discourage anyone from petitioning, because the risk of loss will be greater than the probable gain. When these defects are eliminated, the Morelos law will be the best yet devised to insure the rapid and automatic valuation of real estate.

Simultaneously with the assessment law, Morelos issued a new revenue law, in which the tax on real estate has been increased from a rate of $5\frac{3}{4}$ to $8\frac{3}{4}$ mills. While this new rate is still absurdly low, nominally, as compared with those prevailing in the United States, it will practically mean more than a doubling of former taxation owing to the greater fiscal valuation to be secured by the new assessment law. Once a correct valuation of real estate is secured, it will then be easy for the State to abolish its medieval taxes on buildings and on commerce and industry, and increase the rate on land values. When this last device is applied no one can longer afford to hold land inactive, and the present depleted population of Morelos will soon be augmented by adventurous immigrants from other States willing and able to soon restore its former economic prosperity.

ROBERT BRUCE BRINSMADE.

Will the Landlords Bankrupt the Country

THE heading of this article may not interest the casual reader because the landlord has had little consideration in the economic makeup of our daily lives, except as a collector of rents. Yet no one pulls harder and more persistently at our purse strings than does this individual.

In order that a clear understanding may be obtained of the subject matter in hand it is necessary to look at the present status of the country and the conditions that did exist in past years, as it is only by comparison that we are able to establish a true basis.

Forty years ago it was possible for a man earning \$9.00 per week to take care of the needs of his family, and lay aside a few dollars a week to provide a nest egg to take care of himself in the sunset of his life. I have known men of no greater income than this to rear a large and respectable family. In the time I speak of above potatoes sold for about 30c. to 35c. per bushel, eggs were 9c. and 11c. per

dozen, meat was 7c. to 18c. per lb., a good home could be rented for \$8 to \$12 per month. We were threshing wheat with a flail, and did most of the labors of life by methods that today would be considered crude if not laughable in comparison with the up-to-date methods now employed.

A great many readers of this article no doubt recognize these facts at a glance, because they have lived through this period. Few, however, have stopped to question why it is that all of the benefits that have come to civilization through the arts and sciences in the production and distribution of wealth have added very little to the welfare of the producers. Wages have increased, that is true, but as this only has the tendency to increase prices it is equivalent to raising yourself by the boot straps, as the saying goes. While the producers have received some benefit it is nothing in proportion to the advance of civilization. It is obvious that a man earning \$9.00 per day is not as well off as his father that earned only \$9.00 per week forty years ago.

Now you will ask by what sleight-of-hand does this transformation take place, and what means must be adopted to right the situation? This is a very natural question and it has a very natural and simple answer. We are living in a country where every few years we have the opportunity to make laws and vote on questions that relate to the well-being of all the people. I dare say that the great majority vote without thinking, and elect men to office to represent them that have not made a study of economic questions. These men stand exactly in the same light as one assuming the position of a physician without having made any study of the human body. The laws they enact and try to enforce are only hodge podge measures. Society is left to figure out a way to abide by them or evade them,

It is necessary for every government to raise revenue to pay for the service it renders to society, and rightly it should, but the method used determines to whom shall go the benefits of the progress of civilization. At present the revenue of the country is being raised, as it has most always been, by taxing the necessities of life, fining men for being industrious, and from taxing a package of chewing gum to everything an individual may possess, providing he does not obtain the service of some clever accountant or attorney to help him evade the laws that he in part is responsible for.

In the meantime the rent of land has doubled and trebled (and even more in some instances) so that within the last year or two an ordinary apartment of five rooms that formerly rented for \$25 to \$30 a month in a large city is now \$75 to \$80. Do not misunderstand that this applies only to residence property, because the increase has affected every part of our business, manufacturing and social fabric. The landlord always has absorbed most of the advantages of civilization which are capitalized at least six years in advance of population, and they will not reduce rents that now absorb a very large portion of the earning power of the country.

So long as we allow some to appropriate as their own

the surface of the earth, God's gift to all, it can be readily seen that it is a simple process for them to absorb everything above a bare living from the producers, business and industry that can live only on and from the land. The landlord burden today is bending, if not breaking, the backs of our business and the producer. If we continue the present system the landlord will bankrupt the nation. The nation would have been bankrupt long ago if it were not for the fact that a municipality or government never has a day of judgment, but keeps piling debt upon debt with no way of settlement. No business could succeed if carried on in this manner. Then why should it exist in government? At the present time our government is making every effort to devise some way to meet the governmental expenses. No suggestion has thus far come that this revenue should be derived from the unearned value that accrues to land. The method advocated is to tax industry and thrift. Taxes should be levied in accordance with benefits received and not according to the ability to pay. In our everyday life this is how we buy and pay for everything we want.

This whole situation can be righted by shifting the burden of taxation from labor and the products of labor to the unearned land values that are produced by society as a whole.

This is no new theory. It is a method that Moses employed about 5,000 years ago and put into operation when he led the children of Israel out of the wilderness. It is now being put into operation in many parts of the world. The State of Pennsylvania has enacted a law whereby in the cities of Pittsburgh and Scranton, a gradual reduction of 10% in taxes is taken off improvements and added to the tax on land values so that in a few years one-half the tax on buildings will have been removed, and a much larger portion of the rental value of land, or the site value due to the growth of the city and the combined efforts of all living within its confines, will be collected to defray the municipal expense. It will then not be profitable to hold land out of use for speculation. All the advantages of location are reflected in land values and this should be absorbed by the tax collected by the community.

G. J. FOYER,

EVEN were there no economic objection to wage legislation, why assume government can be wise enough to regulate wages when it hasn't learned how to manage streets and roads well? —H. M. H., in *Cleveland Citizen*.

BUILDING activities in centers that have the advantage of exemption provisions have shown advances far beyond less favored communities. During February contracts for building operations in New York City rolled up a total of \$59,325,000, the largest on record, and of which more than \$38,000,000, or 65 per cent., was for individual buildings. It is noticeable, too, that the Pittsburgh district, where the half rate exemption on buildings obtains, reached a total in the month of February of \$24,881,000.

Edwin Burgess— An Interesting Fore- runner of Henry George

IN the SINGLE TAX FIVE YEAR BOOK two pages are devoted to Edwin Burgess, an old-time resident of Racine, Wisconsin, one of the "forerunners" of Henry George. A recent incident brought the personality of this remarkable man more strikingly to my mind. I am sure something concerning him will interest those readers of the REVIEW who may never have heard of him.

Among the extensive collection of books and pamphlets left by the much beloved and distinguished late Chief Justice John B. Winslow, of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, there was found a pamphlet of thirty-six pages entitled "Letters on Taxation," written by Edwin Burgess, and published from time to time during 1859 and 1860, in the *Racine Advocate*. Through the kindness of Mrs. Winslow it was my privilege to read this pamphlet. Mrs. Winslow was born and grew to womanhood in Racine, and in her childhood lived across the street from Mr. Burgess. She knew the old man well, in the sense that a child can know an elderly neighbor, and speaks of him interestingly.

The pamphlet was compiled by William S. Buffham as a labor of love, and was printed some years ago, but without date. It opens with a woodcut portrait of Mr. Burgess, followed by a sketchy "Introduction" signed by Hyland Raymond and William S. Buffham. The introduction is chiefly biographical, and recites that Mr. Burgess was born in London, England, in 1807, and died in Racine, Wis., in 1869. He had a common school education, and was a tailor by trade, conducting a tailoring business in Racine for many years. The letters are eleven in number, from two to three pages in length, and are interspersed with verses of some merit, as illustrated by the following:

"Why tax we the produce of any one's toil,
While it raises the price of the land,
And limits the sale, by enhancing the price
Of the food which the poor must demand?"

It raises the price of the product of land,
And lowers the wages of toil,
So the workers have little their wants to supply,
And nothing to purchase the soil.

* * * * *

"May we reap the reward we've endeavored to sow,
Of free land and the freedom of trade,
That the taxes may henceforth be all on the land
And never on labor be laid."

A few sentences will indicate the sureness with which he reasoned out the fundamental economic laws involved in the land question twenty years before the masterly work of Henry George was given to the world. The following sentences are selected to illustrate with what clearness and