

There is Still an Irish Land Question

By John Hobbins of Limerick, Ireland

TO live in great cities is not the natural life for man. Under such conditions he tends to deteriorate physically, mentally and morally. Man cannot live by bread alone. But if he suffers in mind, body and soul from being crowded into too close contact with his fellows, so also does he suffer from being separated too far from them. The beauty and grandeur of nature pall upon man where other men are not to be met; her infinite diversity becomes monotonous where there is no human relationship.

In our cities we find people packed together so closely that they live over one another in tiers; in the country we see people separated so widely that they lose all the advantages of neighborhood. In Ireland, as you move along the country roads, your companion, if he be an old man, will point out to you spot after spot, now utterly desolate, which were the sites of populous villages when he was a boy.

On the other hand, go up in a plane and get a view of the cities of Dublin, New York or London, and you will see houses climbing heavenwards ten, twelve or even twenty stories, one family living above another, without sufficient light or air, without playground or breathing space. Yet around these cities and within easy

access of their centers there is plenty of vacant land.

In Ireland we have the best land in the world but the worst system of taxation. To produce, to improve, is fraught with a penalty. In fact, we treat the man who produces wealth, or accumulates wealth, as though he had committed a crime. If a man goes out upon vacant land, cultivates it, covers it with crops, or stocks it with cattle, we make him pay for producing increased wealth.

We do not even get cheap government. We might keep a royal family, house them in palaces like Versailles, and provide them with courts and guards, for much less than is wasted under our so-called government of the people. The people know all this, but the popular idea of reform seems to be a change of parties, not a change of system.

The above article is from the November Henry George School Magazine published in London. In a summer issue of this magazine, Shirley-Anne Sanderson reflected, "What a wonderful surprise it would be for the tutors of the basic course if they were to hear their students arguing instead: 'It must be a sound idea, for you never hear of it from the government. But I have the feeling the government is going to hear of it yet!'"