

# Land and Freedom

FORMERLY THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

Vol. XXIV

MAY—JUNE, 1924

No. 3

## Current Comment

**T**HERE are said to be seventy thousand persons out of employment in Los Angeles. In the meantime the *Examiner* and other papers of the city are carrying real estate advertisements covering full pages. One is especially illuminating. It tells us that city land values are based on two things—population and wealth. "Buy your lot with this in mind." "Let the Profit-Making Machine work for you." As a companion picture the *Record*, of Los Angeles, prints columns of letters from jobless men.

**W**HAT the *Examiner* calls a Profit-Making Machine is also a Poverty-Making Machine. The foolish people of Los Angeles do not realize this just yet. Some have been able to profit by it. Some Los Angeles Single Taxers have been able to make money out of this Profit-Making, Poverty-Making Machine. Hence the lack of enthusiasm in the gospel of emancipation on the part of a few who hope to profit further by the workings of the Machine. This lack of harmony—this rift in the loot, so to speak—is perhaps largely responsible for the differences that have developed among our friends, and of this it may be that not even they are wholly conscious.

**I**NSTEAD of having their attention drawn to this phenomenon of unemployment now visible in Los Angeles and elsewhere in California, the press of that state, blind leaders of the blind, are exulting in the increase of population! An increase of nearly four per cent. over last year sends the Pasadena *Star-News* into a perfect chortle of delight. It says: "Virtually four million souls in this great state! It is inspiring. King Solomon did not have four million subjects. California is on the forward march." And more to the same effect.

**I**T is difficult properly to characterize stuff of this kind. As if mere numbers meant anything. As if, combined with what is happening in Los Angeles, and elsewhere, this growth of population were not darkly ominous of the morrow! Yet it is this utterly blind and childish outlook upon life that animates the thought and speculations and teachings of those who as editors or writers for the newspapers seek to educate the public. No wonder that the papers are crowded with letters from men vainly seeking

employment. One of these in the *Los Angeles Record* is a sample. It says: "I am one of the thousands of deluded easterners of small means who harkened to the siren call and came to your city, only to find unemployment rampant everywhere. Why deliberately lie about your city?"

**F**RIENDS of the Cooperative movement are not always able to perceive that until the "silent partner"—i.e., the receiver of economic rent—is eliminated from industrial undertakings, the result of cooperative effort must prove largely futile. This is coming to be recognized by some of those most active in the cooperative movement. From a paper called *Cooperation in Action* published at Leesville, Louisiana, we extract the following:

But even in this matter of housing the possibilities of co-operative effort cannot be fully realized because the co-operators must go to profiteering private interests for the land on which their houses rest, for building materials and for the credit required during the building period. Only when private interests have been ousted from their control of land and other natural resources will it be possible for workers to acquire good homes with a reasonable expenditure of labor. This co-operative housing exhibit simply points the way.

**S**ENATOR NORRIS reveals the vast land booms that hung on the Ford Plan of Muscle Shoals development. The Senator displayed a huge mass of advertising literature presenting glittering promises of returns to investors in land in the neighborhood of the proposed development. This should contain a hint for Mr. Ford, for had his plan gone through thousands of non-producers would have profited by what he might have been able to do.

**T**HE U. S. Senate has approved the finance committee's proposition to tax radio sets ten per cent. The House Committee has not, we understand, approved of the tax. Edna K. Wooley, the able correspondent and special writer for the *Cleveland News*, has this to say:

It is not known just how radio sets are to be taxed; whether the tax is to apply only on sets newly purchased, the tax to be added in the purchase price (and then some), or if it is to be applied to every set now owned in the land, whether it's the latest thing in super-heterodynes, or Johnny's accomplishment with the aid of a couple of empty rolled oats boxes.

I'll prophesy right now that if the tax is to apply to every set in existence at present it will be some fun to collect it, and the \$10,000,000 which the Senate sees coming in on a radio tax, will be more of a dream than a fact. Still—

we may come to it. We may yet see a new army of government employees—whom we shall have to pay out of our taxes, of course—snooping around, making notes of every aerial they see. We may have them ringing the doorbell and showing their official authority for inspecting the house to discover any hidden radio set where there is no outdoor aerial to tell the tale. And then, when they find Johnny's oatmeal boxes wound with some wire, and a homemade loop, tucked away in some corner, won't it be worth the tax hound's salary to confiscate it because Johnny didn't declare it for taxation?

Of course nobody thinks this is possible. But we have seen so many "impossible" things come about in recent years that we are getting nervous. Nobody thought prohibition would work out the way it's been doing, and nobody suspected that the income tax would ever become the burden it is—we all thought the latter was a splendid idea when it was first discussed, you know. It was intended to "soak the rich," as most of our other taxes were supposed to do. But the taxes are much like rain which falls alike on the just and the unjust—the trouble being that a few have good umbrellas to fend off the worst of it while the majority get soaked as they trudge along.

**T**HE Woman's Committee for Political Action, with headquarters at Washington, among whom we note the names of Carrie Chapman Catt, Zona Gale and Julia Marlowe Sothern, have issued a Statement of Principles. This advocates in declaration number I, "Public control and conservation of natural resources, secured by taxation on all land values." Number V. reads: "Government revenue to be raised, not by tariffs but by (a) taxes on large incomes and inheritances; and (b) on land values; and (c) profits on government banking; (d) savings from reduction of armaments."

Miss Grace Isabel Colbron has called the attention of the Woman's Committee to the incongruity of these declarations, pointing out that a tax on land values would meet all the legitimate expenses of government if the cost of armaments be omitted. The Woman's Committee may plead political opportunism for these conflicting demands, but it is to be regretted that they think it necessary to make this concession to prevailing error. The thanks of Single Taxers are due to Miss Colbron for pointing out to these ladies, to whom she is well and favorably known for her dramatic and literary criticism, that their programme leaves a good deal to be desired.

**T**HE *Dearborn Independent* (Henry Ford's paper), of March 22nd, published a full page article by the editor of LAND AND FREEDOM, under the title, "Has the Single Tax Theory Made Progress?" At the request of the editor of the *Independent* this was confined to a record of achievement, which is usually more convincing than purely academic argument.

Mr. Harry H. Willock, of Pittsburgh, has generously undertaken to reprint this article in neat pamphlet form for wide distribution. The first edition will be twenty-five thousand copies. Mr. Willock has placed them at the disposal of

the Single Tax Publishing Company, and they will be sent free to those who can distribute them effectively and will send the necessary postage with their requests for copies.

We are sure that all Single Taxers will join with us in our acknowledgement to Mr. Willock for this handsome contribution to the movement.

## Professor Laughlin Muddles the Issue

**T**HE argument made by socialists against "capitalism" are only a little less defective than the arguments made by the defenders of "capitalism" against socialism. In a recent number of the *Yale Review* Professor J. Laurence Laughlin, in an article entitled "The Logic of Capitalism," assumes that the socialists abandon their case in that while they inveigh against capitalism they contend for state control of capital. By a curious inversion of logic the Professor assumes that this at once disposes of the arguments of our socialist friends.

It is sometimes not very clear what socialists mean by "capitalism." As we understand it, however, it is the private control of capital. That is at least understandable. If Professor Laughlin had confined himself to showing why private control of capital is preferable to public control, instead of endeavoring to prove that socialists are guilty of inconsistency, he might have made a better job of it. Defenders of socialism are guilty of no such absurdity as the Professor implies.

The Professor's article is worthless as an indictment. It is equally worthless as clearing up a misunderstanding. Private control of capital is defensible enough, but such private control works differently under different conditions. Of this the Professor evinces no apprehension.

The inherent fallacy of all such discussions pro and con regarding capital is that it goes on with an important factor left out. Capital can produce nothing without land. In all production there is an ill-assorted partnership consisting of laborer, capitalist and landowner. If Professor Laughlin has ever heard of the last named he does not mention him. If he has ever heard of land in connection with production he does not tell us.

## Tax Jugglers

"And be these juggling fiends no more believed  
That palter with us in a double sense:

That keep the word of promise to our ear,

And break it to our hope." —MACBETH

**T**HERE is a sacred right to property—sacred because ordained by the laws of nature, that is to say, by the law of God, and necessary to social order and civilization. That is the right of property in things produced by labor; it rests on the right of a man to himself.

—HENRY GEORGE.