

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

WE have often pondered over the sweetness of "the uses of adversity" especially if we were prosperous at the time. It had a soothing effect, its poetry was appealing and it carried the weight of authority. Yet it conveyed a subtle warning, suggesting unwelcome possibilities, such as aches and pains, a leaky roof, or a depleted bank balance. In our various ways we sought the most efficient means to meet such situations should they arise.

AS we near the end of the tenth year of the greatest depression ever known we still ponder. And as we examine the means employed to combat this depression we are appalled at their futility. The world is still without economic knowledge. In the science of political economy we are apparently little beyond the blood-letting stage, judging by the various panaceas offered. The money theory of prosperity, as always, is everywhere and the Longs and the Townsends are omnipresent. We have tried restriction of production in hitherto unthought of ways using up a good part of the alphabet. There seems to be a vague idea that increasing the volume of money will decrease unemployment, so we issue more of it. Business is at a standstill, yet the banks are asked to extend more credit even if any basis of credit has been destroyed. The amount of both money and credit available is enormous while tangible security for loans suffers a constant decrease in value.

TAXES continue to increase together with mounting fixed charges on public debt and the banks extend further credit to the government by the purchase of government bonds and short term notes. The proposal that steps be taken to increase production is "unthinkable." So production, the only thing that can pay debts, living expenses or anything else is taxed and otherwise discouraged and, as we approach the vanishing point of any credit basis, comes the latest panacea:—The Federal Government will lend where the banks refuse. In some obscure way, lending will stimulate prosperity while the public debt rises, as the government issues more bonds

to provide funds for the loans. All this is offered to cure the phenomena of idle men, idle capital and idle land. Prosperity for over nine years has been and still is, just around the corner and millions are still unemployed. "Sweet are the uses of adversity!"

YET the people seem to want all this, otherwise they would do something about it. True, they complain of "the terrible and increasing taxes" and "if things keep on, the government will own everything." This kind of complaint is widespread and increasing, the people are becoming more and more tax conscious and the time is most opportune to put forth a real constructive programme. While the full measure of "abolish all taxation save that on land *values*" may be more than a tax ridden people can digest at this time, it should appeal to them as never before. The nation is looking for a way out.

THE second day of September marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Henry George. He died in 1897, nearly forty-two years ago and since that date, we are told the movement has made no progress. This criticism comes not only from some of his adherents, but in comments from time to time in the outside press. We do not share this view, nor did the late editor and founder of this paper. On the contrary we feel that the cause has progressed, not despite times and conditions but because of them and that the whole economic situation favors it.

THIS brings us to consider the history of an earlier movement, the most fundamental of which we have any knowledge. In the first century of the Christian era, about 54 A. D., the early Christians were whispering their convictions in the catacombs of Rome. Over two centuries later, in the same city, under the reign of Diocletian, there occurred the last and greatest of the Christian massacres. The result was considered so complete that coins were struck off to commemorate "the annihilation of the Christians." This was in 303 A. D.