

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

HARRY L. HOPKINS is Administrator of the FERA, one of the many alphabetical permutations of the Washington administration, meaning in this case that he is head of the Relief Work. He tells us that we have on the relief rolls 7,000,000 children under sixteen. He says in the *New York Times* of recent date:

The conviction is that relief as now extended to the unemployed does not exercise sufficient curative effect and is generally unsound and undesirable as a permanent activity. There is no insurmountable reason why we should continue to give it. There is nothing inherent in the direct relationship of people to the necessities of existence—land, air and water—which should prevent their having a good life. There is enough air to go around. There are five oceans from which to recruit rain and replenish our rivers. There is land and to spare.

IS there "land and to spare?" Not for them there isn't. There is land for the Astors and all the landowners, great and small. But try to get it, ye 7,000,000 children, either now or later when ye come to manhood, ye and your fathers. No, Mr. Hopkins, there is no land for them because it is monopolized by less than five per cent of the people. Perhaps sensing that what he says is just not so, he adds: "I feel that we need to know more about this business of unemployment and its hazards." Yes, Mr. Hopkins, you do.

THEN he says: "I think that under the circumstances we can be absolved of conceit if we say we are practical diagnosticians of the trouble." The remedy he suggests is a programme of unemployment insurance. But this leaves the problem just as it is. Fire insurance does not abolish fires any more than unemployment insurance abolishes unemployment. To provide for unemployment would mean increased taxation and increased taxation means more unemployment. Oh, you practical diagnostician!

MR. HOPKINS says again: "I believe the time has come to decentralize as much of industry as possible, and I do not say this as a follower of Gandhi or of Longfellow." (Two noted economists!) But even in Arcadia the process of industry follows the same lines as in New York City and Washington. If there is idle

land there is idle labor and idle capital. And if Mr. Hopkins thinks there is "land and to spare" let him go out and try to use it without permission of the owner and at the owner's price. He will find he is not half the diagnostician he thinks himself.

HE is half conscious that what he and his associates are doing is not a real remedy, for he says: "It is inevitable that until we become physically a better race than we are, there will be many to sieve through all the safety devices." So that's the trouble, is it? From ten to fifteen millions are out of employment because they are not physically fit! Were they physically fit when about 7,000,000 or 11,000,000 more people were at work, and wherefore this sudden decline in physical fitness? Ah, then, a thought! Is the present depression due perhaps to physical unfitness? And you a diagnostician! Come, Harry, think it over.

WE are a great admirer of L. D. Beckwith's *Forum* and *No Taxes*. There are few writers in the movement who have a keener grasp of economic principles and a greater persuasiveness in teaching them. But we wish he were not so naive in his propensity to set everybody else right. Even when we agree with him, which is most all the time, we are compelled to wish that he would adopt a different tone. In his characterization of Georgist papers he speaks of LAND AND FREEDOM as "cautious and non-committal on the interest question." He knows very well, for we have so stated, that while we believe that Henry George's treatment of the interest question leaves something to be desired, we accept his teaching that wages and interest fall together, that interest is economically and morally justified, and can be defended as a form of deferred wages. We have repeatedly said so, though in common understanding much of what is regarded as interest is really rent. We do not think it necessary to say this in every issue.

PERHAPS owing to a lack of background in his knowledge of the history of the movement he makes a more serious misstatement. Speaking of Oscar Geiger he says: "Geiger, according to the *New York Times*, was regarded by Henry George as the economist of the movement, and yet Geiger was one of the Committee of Forty-Eight that founded the Farmer Labor Party." The Committee