

STATE OF WAR PERMANENT UNLESS—

BY LOUIS WALLIS

Doubleday, Doran Co., N. Y. C. 96 pp., Price \$1.00

Mr. Wallis has added some chapters to his little volume "Safeguard Productive Capital," and brought the subject out in a new book entitled, "State of War Permanent Unless . . ."

The new part precedes the former work and contains some very apt remarks on the present state of the so-called "civilized world." Mr. Wallis deals mainly with conditions of the present in England and Germany, with the danger of war hanging over Europe. His keen, vivacious, interesting style carries the reader with him. Some of his statements are worth emphasizing, in contrast to the egregious errors that even our best dailies are making nowadays. Mr. Wallis, for instance, does not rave about "Old Czecho-Slovakia" as if it had existed since the world began, but says:

"The Czecho-Slovak Republic was created by Britain and France not for the purpose of promoting democracy, but in order to blockade the expansion of Germany eastward. Its origin had nothing to do with moral principles; and no appeal to moral principles has been made in the disruption of the little state."

The sound common-sense of that remark deserves wide recognition. Another telling truth in Mr. Wallis' book is:

"The time has passed when the aristocracy of any land in Europe can wage war by conscripting youth and levying taxes upon the people at large in the name of 'patriotism'."

And still another sentence is worthy of note:

"It is not the dictators themselves that the world has to deal with primarily, but the economic problems which produce dictatorship."

These thoughts alone make the new form of the book valuable to all readers who would understand the true problems that face civilization today.—G. I. C.

PAMPHLETS RECEIVED

IS ECONOMICS A SCIENCE?

BY L. D. BECKWITH, 1325 E. POPLAR ST., STOCKTON, CAL.

We have just received, in pamphlet form, the first thirty sections of what the author intends to develop into a text-book on the above entitled subject. Mr. Beckwith, publisher of "No Taxes" and the author of the work, states that the pamphlets are for free distribution. Inviting his readers to find, if they can, any weak links in his argument, he says:

"If the teachings of this book stand up under the criticism that will be directed against them and they are accepted, the greatest revolution in thought the world has ever known will result; for that will mean that men will have to change completely their present approach to problems involving their policies in civics, politics, industry and statecraft, and in pedagogy and in character-building."

Mr. Beckwith's cardinal point is that

"we can have wholesome civic conditions, honest politics, democratic government, social justice, racial harmony, and international peace, just as we have good automobiles, good airplanes, and good radios—without waiting for men to reform or be reformed."

Editor Beckwith has our best wishes in this undertaking.

UNWISE TAXATION AS A BURDEN ON HOUSING

BY HAROLD S. BUTTENHEIM. PRICE 10 CENTS

Order from Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 32 E. 29th St., N. Y. C.

Mr. Buttenheim, Editor of the *American City*, is to be complimented for this painstaking and scholarly work of 20 pages, now appearing under separate cover, having been reprinted from the *Yale Law Journal* for December, 1938. Besides being chock full of information particularly useful to Georgists, it stands out as a nicely

balanced treatment of the ethical, fiscal and practical aspects of the subject, supplemented by interesting notes, figures and references, all interspersed with an appropriate humor. We quote the initial paragraphs:

The epitaph of one Rebecca Bogess, who died in Folkestone, England, on August 22, 1688, tells of the satisfaction of the deceased with her new "house" where the landlord could never raise the rent, and concludes:

"From chimney-tax this cell is free,
"To such a house who would not tenant be?"

When England imposed the chimney-tax from which Rebecca could escape only by death, and when, in the reign of William III, a tax was imposed on two or more panes of glass in a window, the lawmakers were doubtless seeking new sources of public revenues rather than methods of preventing the attainment of decent housing by the British people. The intent, however, did not alter the effect: chimneys became fewer, and windows smaller. Healthful, liveable housing was handicapped.

Were it now proposed to revive these ancient English levies, the unwisdom of so doing would be recognized by all. But we are still taxing chimneys and windows in our American cities. We are also taxing doors and walls and roofs and stairs and the other parts of our homes. We no longer pick on the chimneys or windows for a special tax, but the tax-gatherer levies on the whole building. When a bathroom or a porch is added, up goes the tax—though any suggestion of taxing bathrooms or porches as such would be laughed out of court. It is to be doubted whether we have really progressed very far in this matter of taxation since William III and the seventeenth century.

We highly recommend the reading of "Unwise Taxation as a Burden on Housing." Copies of it should be in the hands of everyone interested in better housing.

PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND EXPLAINED

BY SPENCER HEATH

We are in receipt of a pamphlet from the pen of Spencer Heath, of Elkridge, Maryland. Much of it serves a useful purpose of enlightenment on the sinister aspects of permitting politicians to impose taxes for the disservices they "render" in addition to real economic services. We confess, however, to a failure to appreciate Mr. Heath's proprietary land ownership ideas. The article, however, is couched in scholarly fashion and we believe can be read with profit.

Correspondence

FROM THE EDITOR OF *COMMONWEAL*

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

I know you will be pleased to see the enclosed first number of the new Volume of *Commonweal*.

It has not been an easy matter to struggle through these last four years of enforced silence, but we have done so, and now make a fresh bid for circulation in the interests of the Cause.

If those who really appreciated the *Commonweal* in the past will now come promptly to its side, then there is, I think, a good prospect of putting it upon a non-losing basis at an early date. What we want now is to have all who would wish to receive the weekly issues send in their order without delay, and we will do the rest.

Under separate cover I send you a few copies that you may bring same before the notice of persons likely to be interested.

J. W. GRAHAM PEACE.

6 The Close, Rayners Lane, Pinner, Middlesex, England.

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

For several years, the writer has sought to interest his fellow Georgists, as well as the Housing Authority of our government in the economic reform which the general use of demountable structures would promote. The response was practically nil. They stood mute before the suggestion that a solution of the housing problem could be achieved through the mass production of small dwellings, so designed that they could be erected upon leased acres, and dismantled and removed when necessary, at slight expense. So we have gone on our squandering way, building structures which were

spawned in Central Europe by the Lake Dwellers, four or five hundred generations ago.

But, someone else has seen the star. Out in Fort Wayne, the local housing authority has discovered that through the use of inexpensive factory-made, demountable houses it is possible to provide adequate shelter for the underpaid, homeless families of that city. Their plan should interest all followers of Henry George. The land speculator receives no profit, and the home is tax-exempt, and a rental of \$2.50 per week gives the family a four-room cottage, with all necessary conveniences. The manner in which sites are obtained is unique. The housing authority purchases city lots at \$1.00 each, giving the owner the option to repurchase his lot, at the same price any time after the expiration of one year. Owners of hundreds of unsaleable lots have welcomed the opportunity to relieve themselves of the necessity to pay further taxes on these lots, until there is a market for them. Presumably, the real estate boys out there are having a good chuckle over their cleverness in getting the State to carry their speculation for them, but the State will have the last laugh, for few, if any, of these lots will ever be repurchased by any individual. Every family domiciled in one of these demountable structures removes one prospective customer from the real estate market, thereby lessening the probability of future sale of our vacant city lots. As the economy of this method of housing becomes apparent, other cities will institute similar programmes, and a greater number of families will be provided for.

The Fort Wayne Project is, however, merely a beginning. The demonstration they are providing will receive the attention of all prospective home owners. The bulk of our home builders are those men whose salary permits them to buy and pay for a \$1,000 lot and a \$5,000 dwelling. When they discover that they can obtain a better dwelling for \$2,500 and can erect it upon an acre or two of land for a few dollars per year, there can be little doubt as to what their choice will be. City lots will then become a drug on the market, but our good old Single Taxer will say, "What is the difference, rent will go up in the country and absorb any expected gain." Is this true? Have you given any thought to the matter? Is there or is there not sufficient land lying within commuting distance of our present centers of population to give several times the number of families who might wish it a small subsistence homestead of this kind? If there is such a plethora of sites, how will the few that are put into use be able to demand increased rent while the remaining sites lay unused and vacant?

Erie, Michigan.

ROBERT L. MCCAIG.

COMMENT ON ABOVE BY HENRY J. FOLEY

Editor's Note.—A similar letter was written by Mr. McCaig to Mr. Henry J. Foley, wherein was added the statement that in the Fort Wayne project they are using small demountable structures upon tax exempt lots. Mr. Foley comments as follows:

In the first place, if the Fort Wayne programme is to build on "tax exempt lots," that is in violent opposition to the entire plan of Henry George. All the taxes would have to be collected on improvements and on production, a worse condition than now, when at least some of the government expenses are paid by land rent.

I doubt if the demountable structure would ever be possible on a large scale in our civilization. Organization and centralization are the natural progress of mankind. It means society. The demountable structure is a return to the civilization of the wandering Arab and the American Indian, and to their life of hardships.

There are many hundreds of thousands who could never leave their present locations to settle in outlying territory. I am a teacher, and I could not adopt the Fort Wayne programme unless I left my job and started life over again, with nothing to start on. Whereas, if Single Tax were put into effect I should have absolutely nothing to do differently except to keep all my salary to live on, instead of seeing it melt into house taxes, income taxes, sales taxes, and a hundred other taxes.

Even if the entire population lived in demountable houses, we still could not get the Single Tax until we could secure laws to collect land rents instead of taxes, which is exactly what we shall have to do with or without the demountable plan.

The only problem before Single Taxers is to induce government to live on the rent of its land instead of on taxes; and the only way in which we shall ever put over this programme is to let the people know that the collection of land rent by individuals is robbery, that the collection of taxes is an additional robbery, and that this double robbery is the plain and sufficient explanation of poverty, unemployment and depression.

New York City.

HENRY J. FOLEY.

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

Our committee on National Organization was organized to unify the Single Taxers of the country to get a measure of Single Tax in one state with a united force.

What have we got?

The committee selected Michigan without asking the Single Taxers of the country their opinion of the best state, though they would be asked to contribute to the work. The people of Michigan can make the necessary change in their tax laws for taxing land value more but only with the approval of the legislature. This should exclude Michigan as our field of team work.

Now there is a group of Single Taxers in Ohio that propose to launch a campaign in that state though the constitution of the state expressly prohibits the use of the initiative for the Single Tax. I am not a lawyer but it appears to me they would be compelled first to repeal this prohibitive clause to get a land value measure on the ballot. So we will be wasting our time and funds in these two states.

For years we have repeatedly had a land value tax measure on the ballot in California. The previous highest vote for it was 160,000. In 1938 this was increased to 372,000 though there were 24 other measures on the ballot. The people there are more social minded and this makes it a good state for our measure. Then the state sends to each voter the amendment with the sponsors' reason for it and the opponents' reason for its rejection. What has been done there is a distinct advancement and it is important we continue to build on it until we complete the structure. The landed and other privileged groups there fear it as nowhere else and they must have a reason for their fear. This fear by its opponents should cause us for the same reason the greatest encouragement.

There should be no retreat from California!

St. Louis, Mo.

E. H. BOECK.

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

In your last issue is a letter from L. D. Beckwith, in which he makes an attempt to defend the ethics of interest. As he carefully abstains from any definition of interest and has never at any time given the law which fixes the rate of returns, it is not easy to tell what he is talking about. I have in my possession an article by him in which he repudiates the definition of interest, "as the payment for the use of borrowed wealth," stating that, this was usury and unjust. Yet in his letter he states that if an infant is left sufficient wealth and it be loaned on interest, he might live to old age without working, for the interest he receives comes out of the use of his capital, though it is without any labor of his; yet if he owns the capital he is entitled to the interest. He also hazards the guess that the division between labor and capital, after rent was paid would be fifty-fifty. Still he gives no hint of any law governing the division.

Now for the ethics. He admits the Bible condemns interest, but he says that the Bible is not a textbook of science. In other words God who ordained the laws governing the distribution of wealth arranged them so as to conflict with his laws of justice and righteousness as laid down in his book. Beckwith evidently does not under-