Land and Freedom

FORMERLY THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

OL. XXXII SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1932 No. 5

A Friendly Letter to the B. E. F.

alter W. Walters, Commander B. E. F.—*Dear Sir:*

OU and your comrades fought for your country, only to find that none of it belonged to you. You were icted from Washington by troops at the command of e government to whose call you responded in time of nger. Nothing was too good for you in the time of war. u will recall the patriotic speeches made in those days, d how everything was promised you. How the people plauded! You were sitting on top of the world.

OUR eviction from Washington by armed forces was not the first eviction of which you and every landless an is the victim. That took place some time ago; that ime antedates your eviction from Washington and is volved in the legislation that evicts you from the earth, at makes you a trespasser in the land you fought for. ou served your country, but to enjoy the use of any part it you must bargain with some one of your fellowmen. you would find a foothold on which to build yourself d family a home you must seek out some one who was ere before you. To him you must pay rent or purchase-ice for the permission to live. Is this the "equality opportunity" of which President Hoover speaks in his dress of acceptance of his Presidential nomination?

N the meantime what do you see? You see groups com-ing to Washington by every train seeking alms for vored industries in which they or their constituents are terested. These tariff beneficiaries are accompanied by nking and railroad lobbyists, all the heterogeneous col-ction seeking government favors. Were they evicted m the Capital? They were not. They were welcomed the White House; they were not compelled to camp out; ey stayed at the best hotels.

LL that, of course, is an accident of conditions. There can be no objection to any of these gentlemen who ek government favors stopping at high-priced hotels. me of them were able to do this because they were in ceipt of government favors. But that again is an acci-nt of conditions—a mere consequence with which we ed not be seriously concerned.

T is with some hesitancy I touch upon what seems to many the weakness of the bonus demand. You were placed in the position of demanding what seems like class legislation. I know the defense and realize its strength. Surely, runs the argument, those who risked their lives when persuaded their country was in danger have a real claim to demand relief. The government has no money save what it takes from you and me. If you had demanded for yourselves that an ancient wrong be righted you would have had, of course, a real claim. But not a prior claim. Others grown to manhood since the war would as cheerfully respond to a call for their country's defense and are in the same position as yourself and your fellows of the B. E. F. They, too, are unemployed and hungry.

I KNOW it is hard. It is an incident charged with bitter irony that must sink deep into your hearts. In France you met the "Huns"—how strange now seems that epithet reviewed in the abysmal insanity of the World War! Yet this, too, is only an accident of conditions. You saw in Washington your former comrades coming at you just like the "Huns" with charging bayonets! Suppose you had been told twelve years ago that this would happen. How insane would have seemed such a prediction!

WHAT I am seeking to impress upon you is that the answer to your problem must be sought fundamentally. The plight of the ex-service men is but one angle of the problem demanding a solution. "My Country, 'tis of Thee" can be sung until men are hoarse without making it true. You know it is not true. The country belongs to less than ten per cent of the people, and the percentage is much less when land is considered according to value. Everywhere you turn you find the land preempted. Does it not seem that a joke—a very serious joke, however—has been perpetrated upon you?

AND then thinking further on the question, is not the conviction borne in on you that your condition and that of millions of your fellow countrymen is due to the denial of the right to the use of the earth? What does employment mean—how is it brought about? Is it possible save by application, direct or indirect, of labor to land? If the land is sequestered, or if excessive payment for its use is demanded, then labor is unemployed. That is what has happened to produce this depression.

THERE is a remedy, of course, because for every social ill there must be a remedy. It lies in the taking of the

annual rent of land for public purposes, thus preventing speculation in land, opening up the earth and getting millions back to work. It is so simple that some distrust it who want complex solutions of simple problems. It can be done tomorrow, not without a shock, they tell us. But if it be just we can risk a shock. Perhaps the Communists will get in ahead of us. That would be somewhat more of a shock.

I SAY if it be just. Land is as necessary to life as air. It is impossible to argue that one man has more right to air than another. It is equally impossible to argue that he has more right to land than another. Land differs from air only in this particular—some of it is occupied or appropriated to exclusive use. How shall the right of every man to the land be established? Happily we are provided with a solution. Land has value as population arises. This value is known as economic rent, and is in proportion to the demand for the use of land. And as it increases with every social service it yields itself admirably to the needs of revenue. Its appropriateness for revenue is obvious from many angles.

AND this revenue would enable us to abolish all taxes Every piece of land having value would then be available for use. And under such conditions there would be no such thing as unemployment. Improvements being exempt from taxation nearly every citizen would benefit, for he would have less taxes to pay. Those who are holders of large tracts of unimproved land, even though their taxes would be increased, would benefit by living in a better civilization where they and their children would no longer be threatened by insecurity, and in which men and women would be free from want and the fear of want. It would make every other reform easier. Disease and crime would be sensibly diminished; government would be simplified and its cost reduced. In every way society would benefit and forces be unloosed for social advance. And then "My Country, 'tis of Thee" would be a truism and not a stupid lie!

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

ANNUAL taxes of $13,000,000,000 are crushing industry. Even some Congressmen and Senators see that. But the effect on industry of $13,000,000,000 of economic rent is such that not a single Congressman or Senator considers it worth mentioning. Could there be more eloquent testimony that taking economic rent for public use in lieu of taxes would be an enormous improvement? Why should not the biggest ignoramuses concerning taxation principles —there are over 400 of these in the House, over 90 in the Senate—see that much? Now let those who have been bearing witness so long by their silence prove by their votes that they have the courage of their convictions.

HE [Henry George] was as guileless as a child and as earnest as a martyr.—WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN.

An Economist's Perplexities

THE world has lost a great teacher. The man doubtless has succeeded more than any political ec mist of the century to spread a knowledge of the scienc political economy was Charles Gide of France. famous economist died in March of this year. He honorary professor at the Paris Law School and professo the College of France at the time of his death. His p cipal work was his "Principles of Political Economy," w has been very widely used in France, England and Am as a college text-book. It was first published about h century ago and has gone through at least eight editio the original French and has been translated into the sian, Swedish, Dutch, Finnish, Polish, Spanish, Boher and English languages.

In commenting on his death, one of the leading finan economic and political dailies of Paris, *L'Informa* remarked that this work was "an authority in the e world as a model of clearness of method and easy, agree captivating reading." Gide himself wrote in the prefa the eighth edition: "What I have endeavored is to gi general description rather than an analysis of the econ world—of the vast domain in which we live and move out knowing very well whither we are going. I have so to arouse curiosity and interest in economic problems r than always to furnish cut-and-dried solutions. I tried not so much to convey absolute conviction base scientific laws that are still imperfectly understood, impart a sincere and fervid desire to discover the trut have, moreover, tried to make political economy, whi France has long borne (without much protestation) name of tedious literature, appear to the beginner a attractive and captivating subject."

The science of political economy, after having lain al as a dead thing for probably half a century, has showing signs of taking a new lease on life. The re for it is not hard to find. It touches the life of every woman and child. The larger part of our time is take with efforts to make a living. Economics is the very dation of our lives. It treats of the nature of wealth the laws governing its production and distribution. laws are not made by man, but by nature, and we mu our own benefit seek these laws. Since 1929, interes been revived in the science, due to the disruption o economic system, previously deemed impregnable, has made men realize that their contempt of economic was a result of their own ignorance.

It is appropriate, therefore, at this time, that atte should be directed to a man who has held a positi prominence in the economic world and who has impr so many people with his views. Then again, it wa countrymen of this man, the Physiocrats, who founded the science in the middle of the eighteenth tury. He owed a great deal to Quesnay, Turgot and