

mare of the past and there will be no fund in the price of land to maintain them.

QUES. 30. How will you bring about the adoption of the Single Tax?

ANS. By the gradual removal of taxes from personal property, imports, etc., and by increasing the tax on land values until no other tax is left and all land values are absorbed and expended for the benefit of the people.

QUES. 31. Why not adopt it at once?

ANS. (1) Because the people are not ready to grasp the whole truth of the Single Tax after they have been accustomed for centuries to tax industry. (2) While it is just to restore to the community the rental value of natural opportunities, nevertheless since the latter has so long acquiesced in the appropriation of these values by private individuals, it is fair to give warning and ample time to the present owners to adjust their affairs to the new conditions that are coming.

---

## AN AGE-OLD PROBLEM.

---

**Extracts from an Address delivered at the Country Life Congress at Omaha,  
January 11th, 1912, by Frank G. Odell, Secretary  
Nebraska Rural Life Commission.**

---

There is a problem as old as human society; ingrown into the hereditary selfishness of men until it has been the bane of every civilization since time began. It is existent in every civilized country today, even in America. This problem is complex, for it touches every phase of human development; its prime factors are necessity, multiplied by greed, and their product is expressed in the literal statement:—"Pay Rent, or Get Off The Earth."

It may be well enough for those of altruistic trend to philosophize over the abstract principles of human brotherhood and declaim that "every man has a natural birthright to the soil;"—their altruism hunts a hiding place when the landlord comes round on the first of the month. Let us recognize the economic tendency of land toward monopolistic control. This may not be inherent in land itself; in fact, I should seriously combat such a statement. I am still, philosophically speaking, of the opinion that God made the earth with all its riches for men to enter into possession of in order that humanity might feed upon the fruits of their labors; but, most unfortunately for this philosophy, the world agrees not with such thinking, holding most stoutly to the practical opinion, very practically expressed in laws and possession, that while God may have been able to create a world, He did not fully understand the proper uses of it.

This tendency toward monopoly in land has been dominant in every age; it is manifestly predominant in human nature as expressed in our social development. If I read history aright it has been the crucial center of every

crises in human progress. If you will scan history again from this, from what may be a new angle of vision to some it will speedily be discovered that the social and economic evolution of the race, with all its sanguinary physical, and all its inspiring intellectual conflicts, has simply epitomized the efforts of struggling men who have striven to break down a wall of human selfishness and get their feet on the land, which, the poets say, "is their birth-right."

This in brief, is all there is in "the back-to-the-land" movement of today which stirs this country from ocean to ocean; it is all there has been in it in any age. I beg to differ most radically with that cult of agricultural leaders who contend that the great problem of our agriculture to day is simply one of more production, or—as they sometimes phrase it—of less cost of production, by those who are now on the land. There are some millions of homeless people in America while I am speaking to you who own your broad acres; any of these, all of these—if they possess any natural rights at all—have at least the right of opportunity to gain access to the land and to try for themselves the somewhat uncertain experiment of feeding themselves and those dependent on their labors.

But when they attempt to gain access to this land which you call their birth-right, there rises a mighty wall of insurmountable privilege which has crystallized in constitutions and statutes, protecting from time immemorial the right of the strongest to prey on the need of the weakest, and the "dead hand" of old-time privilege bars the once open gate of opportunity.

It will require a wiser man than any I have yet met to convince that which serves me in place of intellect that any amount of increased production by you who are now on the land will make it materially easier for these homeless ones to have the blessings of roof-tree and fireside for themselves,—unless there shall first be given to them the opportunity which you have enjoyed.

Somewhere in this vexatious human equation, we must begin to eliminate the unknown, but guessed at quantities which swallow up the profits of your toil at one end and the profits of those who feed upon your products at the other end. When this hoary criminal institution is run by the hounds of an enlightened public conscience to its last hiding place, it will be found crouching under the protecting mantle of constitutions and statutes, pleading its "divine right" to *monopoly in land* which should spell to every thinking man, *monopoly of opportunity*.

---

THE man holding an acre idle is performing no service to the community thereby.

---

WHAT do we want to see? Idle men, or idle acres? Why reward men for keeping land idle and punish men for using it?