

her poor little starved life illustrates? Can they not see that institutional injustice looms very plain behind the simple story of this little heroine?

And our law makers! Are they criminal or stupid? These things cry out against those institutions for which their laws are responsible. The earth is a closed storehouse—hence the little drudges in Nutley and elsewhere, childhood robbed of its joys, the way made hard for little feet.

What a responsibility is ours who see and know the truth. Why are the doors to Nature's storehouse closed? Is it a wonder that we grow impatient with our own dilatory tactics, that we stand before the barred gates, the fences, the paper titles, the "No trespass" signs built all over God's earth—God's and Mary McNally's—and utter in very agony the cry that shall yet reach the Poets and Preachers and Lawmakers, seemingly deaf to its appeal—"Open! Open!"

To Hold The Sea In Fee Simple

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Standard*, of New South Wales, gives a valuable tip to the government of Australia for raising revenue. The suggestion is that it sell the sea to private individuals and establish what is already established as to land—ownership in fee simple.

The plan offers great possibilities. If recollection serves us rightly, one of the early Popes did give away the Mediterranean, so the correspondent's suggestion is fortified by precedent.

There would be some difficulty in staking out claims, but the limits of ownership could be fairly well designated by shore measurements, and no doubt the value of location could be ascertained. Such value would vary in degree with shore proximity, tending to diminish as the "property" drew near the three mile limit, for we understand the author of the proposal to confine his suggestion to the *mare clausum*, thus avoiding possible international entanglements. Beyond the three mile limit certain nations have already made rather intangible claims of limited proprietorship which nevertheless were, we believe, set aside by a general consensus of the nations. This statement is predicated on the rather remote possibility that we understand what the nations were driving at when they talked recently in learned terms of the "freedom of the seas."

Economic rent would soon arise, though it would be likely to shift in a way perplexing to the rent payer when he came to estimate the yearly rental he could afford to pay to the sea lords, according, let us say, to the fish harvests at certain points with the same application of capital and labor. It would vary, too, with the kind of piscatorial harvest, whale-land—pardon, whale-sea—being rated somewhat higher than sword fish deposits, which would nevertheless have higher value when compared with the waters frequented by the lesser of the finny tribe.

But, of course, the main revenues would come from tolls on ships passing over these "no trespass" seas; fees that

bathers would have to pay the owners of the waters; and the small rent tax that little toddlers would have to give up who had just learned to waddle in the surf.

As a matter of fact—and quite serious we are in saying this—it would soon come to be looked upon as the natural thing. Merely because the sea moves, and land does not, is no reason why it should not be private property. Land moves, too, sometimes. Land torn up by earthquakes does not change owners if the man who holds the title deed can locate his property after a seismic upheaval. The same ought to be true of the sea.

So on the whole the suggestion is really worthy of consideration by our lawmakers. The land within the three mile limit belongs to the government. It would bring a tidy sum if sold at auction, and it is of no present use to the government itself. To sell it, and thus make it a source of revenue, involves no greater absurdity—we say no greater, being careful to choose our words—than many of the things it now does with light heart and a perfectly sober face.

Abolish Restrictions— But Whose?

A LETTER signed by Alexander C. Brown, president, and Munson Havens, secretary of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, is printed in the *Cleveland Plain-dealer*. It is addressed to the Building Trades Council. In one portion of the letter it asks for "the removal of all restrictions upon production and upon the freedom of men to engage in your industry."

And they say: "The public interest will be served by the removal of restriction and limitations."

To what restrictions and limitations upon production and the freedom to engage in industry does this refer? To building lots held idle? To taxes that lessen and restrict enterprise? To exorbitant rents extorted as the profits of the worker tend to increase? The language is an appeal to labor and trades unions to remove *their* kinds of restriction? Bad as these are, the writers of this appeal do not seem to know that there are restrictions and limitations on production which compared to those referred to are as whales to minnows.

Why not recognize these restrictions imposed by labor and trades unions for what they are—rules made necessary because of the restrictions by which labor finds itself shut off from the opportunity of employment and confronted with a surplus labor underbidding for jobs?

We hold no brief for labor unions. Their policy is shortsighted, futile and destructive. Their rules are oppressive and rob the individual worker of his independence. But if they will not *think* their only weapons are the weapons of restriction and force. Their only reply to restrictions is more restrictions—massed action, collective bargaining, and the threat of the strike held in the immediate background.

It ill becomes the other side, who also will not think, to talk of the restrictions of trade and labor unions, and ignore all others. For these men should know better. They have leisure, or more leisure at least, and greater opportunity. Their lives have not been lives of incessant toil. For the most part they have had the advantages of longer schooling and higher culture. If they do not know the meaning of trade union restrictions and the problem underlying employment, their case is no whit better than that of the members of the Building Trades.

What if some more intelligent members of the Building Trades should address the Chamber of Commerce—and Chambers of Commerce are composed largely of the representatives of the privileged interests—somewhat to this effect:

"We ask the removal of the restrictions you have imposed upon industry; we ask the removal of the limitations you place upon employment. You have established a system of tribute on industry levied by landlordism; you have drawn a paper title fence around ever so many vacant lots in the city of Cleveland, on which labor, and the capital that would follow it, cannot go save by the payment of a higher price than it can now afford to pay. You have established a system of taxation that further restricts employment. Let it be a bargain; if you will abolish *your* restrictions, we will abolish *ours*."

How many of these self-righteous members of the Chamber of Commerce would be willing to heed such an appeal? Very few, we fancy. Receivers of rent, owners of vacant lots, shifters of taxation on to the shoulders of others, as most of them are, *these* kinds of restrictions on industry they do not propose to abolish. And this makes all such appeals to labor organizations, or the abuse of them, full of a naive hypocrisy of which we cannot help but believe many of them are more than half conscious.

Poisoning the Wells

UNDER the heading, "Rainbow Chasers," the Los Angeles *Sunday Times*, of February 26th, collected a larger number of erroneous statements as to the meaning and purposes of the Single Tax philosophy than we have ever before seen gathered together in a single article. The editorial writer must maintain a scrap book in which he carefully pastes all the plausible misrepresentations of the Single Tax that he can find while eschewing all correct representations of it. He finds no difficulty in demolishing the straw men which he sets up, but he never touches the reality of Single Tax at all. We would apologize for wasting our readers' time in the refutation of his errors, but that other hostile editors are likely to parrot them and it may be worth while to have the answers handy.

Error No. 1.—The Single Tax would make "*real estate* the only source of taxable revenue." Apart from the clumsy and inaccurate phrase, "taxable revenue," the Single Tax would not tax real estate, which in common

parlance means land *and improvements*, but only land according to its value exclusive of improvements. The difference is not superficial but fundamental.

Error No. 2.—"Voltaire wrote against the Single Tax." Even if he did, his condemnation would have no element of finality. Voltaire had no conception of the Single Tax in its modern meaning. The physiocrats used the term "impot unique," but related it only to agricultural land. While we are proud to count them among our economic ancestors, we know that the conditions when they lived were not such as to make it possible for them to comprehend what is clear to us.

Errors 3, 4 and 5.—Henry George "arrived at the conclusion that all land should belong to the governed, should be common property. Should be taxed so heavily that it would no longer be profitable to its owners." To Single Taxers it will, of course, be unnecessary to point out that Henry George did not advocate either nationalization of the land or communism of land, and that he advocated taking in taxes only the value which the land derived from the presence of population and services of government.

Error No. 6.—"The faithful followers of Henry George believe that none would be rich and none poor if all the land were owned by the government." We repeat that no faithful follower of Henry George believes in government ownership of the land.

Error No. 7.—"Henry George's theory has been put to a concrete test in a number of communities in various parts of the world and has registered an unbroken succession of disastrous failures." Henry George's theory has never had a concrete test anywhere. Enthusiasts and opponents of the Single Tax have at various times and in various places heralded certain fiscal experiments in land value taxation as the adoption of the Single Tax in those places, and when such places experienced the ordinary vicissitudes of boom towns and counties, the cry was raised, "The Single Tax has failed," much as people have cried that competition has failed, democracy has failed and even Christianity has failed, when none of them has had a real trial. Moreover, no community in Australia or New Zealand which has tried the policy of exemption of improvements and taxation of land values for local purposes has gone back to the old system such as exists in California. In Canada, they have, in some communities, put back buildings on the assessment lists, but only at half their value. On this point it might be well to cite the example of the City of New York where, having made one year's experiment of exempting new buildings from taxation, they liked the results so well that the policy was extended for another year by the unanimous action of both parties in the legislature.

Error No. 8.—Now comes the great effect to which all other errors are only introductions. Will it surprise the Single Taxers to know that the Single Tax was put into effect by Lenin and Trotsky when the government ownership of the land was introduced in Russia? Yet that is in substance what this editorial writer avers. He says, "One