

Demands of Soldiers and Sailors

THE recent organization of the Private Soldiers' and Sailors' Legion of the United States of America, through its national president, Marvin Gates Sperry, has petitioned Congress as follows:

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

Gentlemen: Your petitioners of the Private Soldiers' and Sailors' Legion of the United States of America, an organization incorporated in March, 1919, under the act of Congress, of those who served as privates in the military and naval forces of the United States during the world war in the years 1917 to 1919, inclusive, hereby respectfully petition the Congress of the United States for the enactment at the earliest possible date of the following legislation, believing as we do that this legislation will not only do a measure of justice to the private soldiers, sailors and marines of the United States who bore the burdens, hazards, and losses of the war, but will promote in the highest degree the welfare and prosperity of all the people of the United States.

We respectfully ask:

First. That Congress enact legislation to provide employment on public works for all soldiers, sailors marines, and war workers who are unable to secure employment in private business.

Second. To tide over the change from military to civil life and as a scant measure of justice to the soldiers, sailors and marines who fought the war to save civilization in 1917 to 1919, we ask that Congress enact legislation to pay each private soldier, sailor, or marine upon his honorable discharge from the service the sum of \$500, this payment also to be made to those who were already discharged previous to the passage of this law.

Third. That as thousands of soldiers were subject to needless hardships and privations by the unjustly heavy fines and penalties imposed on soldiers by incompetent and unfit officers in courts-martial for insignificant, petty infractions of military regulations, Congress should at once take necessary action to see that these fines for petty offenses should be promptly repaid to the honorably discharged soldiers, sailors, and marines. Legislation should also be enacted to review all court-martial findings, with a view that justice may be done.

Fourth. In aid of the foregoing policy for providing work for the unemployed we ask prompt action by Congress to open up for demobilized soldiers, sailors, and marines the opportunity to employ their labor on the unused lands and natural resources of our country. And we don't want to be confined to swamp lands, cut-over stump lands, and desert lands, either. We hold that hundreds of millions of idle acres of good agricultural, mineral, and timber lands and vacant city lots are none too good for the use of the soldiers who are conceded to have saved civilization at \$30 per month minus large reductions for

court-martial fines, insurance, etc. Nature's bounty has provided Uncle Sam and all his nephews with ample opportunity for all to work if the Government will only let down the bars of monopoly and privilege.

Fifth. We ask that the burdensome and onerous taxes now levied as a war measure on ice cream, soda water, and soft drinks, and those levied by section 906 of the revenue act of 1918, approved February, 1919, on the private soldier's and poor man's theater, known as the film tax, be repealed.

Respectfully submitted.

Great Britain's Land Revolution

A MOMENTOUS revolution is going on in England. The land question, though concerned this time only with mineral rights, is again to the forefront.

Most of the coal and iron lands of England were parcelled out by Henry VIII to his friends when he forcibly dispossessed the Church of its holdings. Today they constitute most of the great sources of revenue for the lords of England. Lord Treadegar's "Golden Mile," which nets its owner a prince's ransom every year, is an example of the tremendous extent of these holdings. The entire income of the Earl of Derby consists of his mineral royalties.

These mineral rights will revert to the Crown. The titles under which these rights are held are pronounced defective, and the bill now before the Commons denies any compensation to the owners for the loss of these mineral royalties.

In anticipation of the threatened revolutionary changes the real estate market of the United Kingdom is now glutted with offers of sale of these rights by the great land barons. The Duke of Devonshire, now Governor-General of Canada, with a forethought not characteristic of his class, has declared his purpose of making no claim for royalties to the oil wells recently found on his estate, which will now become national property.

Land and Liberty, the organ of the advocates of land value taxation in England, prints extensive reports of the testimony taken before the Coal Committee in response to questions put by Mr. Robert Smillie. It says: "We congratulate Mr. Smillie and his friends. The defenders of special privilege and monopoly are not likely to recover from the shock of this challenge."

Searching questions into the origin of these land titles and mineral rights were put, and much interesting information elicited. All of the report is so good that brief extracts will give an inadequate impression. But we venture to quote a portion bearing on the fundamental law concerning the right to landed property, from which we may gather something of Mr. Smillie's convictions and the searching character of his questions:

THE LAW OF TITLE TO LAND

MR. SMILLIE, cross-examining Lord Durham, asked: I suppose it may be taken that the land, which includes the minerals and metals, is essential to the life of the people?

Do you agree?—If you like, I accept that. They cannot live in the air.

Provided a limited number of people hold the whole of the land, they practically hold the lives of the people in the land at their disposal?—I do not accept that.

You do agree that land is essential to the life of the people, but you will not accept the proposal that if the land is in the hands of a limited number of people practically they hold the lives of the people at their disposal?—The lives of the people who live on my land are as happy as those on any other land, and it makes no difference whether I own it or not.

Land is quite as necessary to life as fresh water or air or sunshine?—Or bread.

We cannot get bread without land. It is one of its purposes to produce bread. You say you own the coal under 12,411 acres of land in the County of Durham?—Yes.

I suppose you claim the ownership of the surface of the land with the minerals under it?—Certainly, in nearly every case.

Do you know whether the law of England allows any person to own land in the full sense?—I am not a constitutional lawyer, but I consider that my title to my land is established by the laws of this country.

MR. SMILLIE then quoted Williams on "Real Property," in which it was said:—"The first thing the student has to do is to get rid of the idea of absolute ownership. Such an idea is quite unknown in English law. No man in law is absolute owner of his lands, but only holds estate in them." "Do you agree with Williams?" asked Mr. Smillie.

The Witness: I have not read him, but I know I am only tenant for life of those lands.

MR. SMILLIE next quoted Coke, who said that all lands were tenements under the law of England and no subject held land except by the King. "Do you agree with Coke?" asked Mr. Smillie.

I will quote a constitutional lawyer, Blackstone, who says:—"It is a received and undeniable principle of law that all lands in England are held immediately by the King." Do you deny Blackstone's authority? If he is correct you cannot hold the land you claim to own?

The Witness: That is your opinion. My family has owned land for a great many years and no one has disputed it.

"We dispute it now," interjected MR. SMILLIE. Continuing, MR. SMILLIE said: I will quote another. There is a very old Book which says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." I am not exactly sure of the author, but it appears in the Bible, upon which you have promised to tell the truth and the whole truth this morning. Would you deny that authority?

The Witness: I prefer another authority, which says, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

MR. SMILLIE: That is exactly what I want to be done at the present time, because if "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," it cannot be the property of individuals.

THE RIGHT TO REFUSE THE USE OF LAND

I have a feeling that you have no title-deeds which justify your ownership of land or minerals, and that being the case I would suggest you ought to give it back to the State, who is the proper owner of it, if I am correct. Now you say that neither you nor your father, who succeeded the first Earl of Durham, has ever prevented coal from being worked by refusing to lease. Does not that answer postulate that if you cared to prevent coal from being worked you could have refused to lease?—I suppose it

could have been done, but I should never dream of refusing to renew a lease.

If you own the coal, and have the right to refuse to lease it, other landowners in your position may do the same?—I suppose so.

That would mean that a comparatively small number of people in refusing to lease the coal of this country would consequently hold the country in their hands to that extent?—You mean, they are blackmailers?

No; I do not mean they are blackmailers. I mean they have the power to do this—I think the State would intervene, just as it would if there were a miners' strike or a railway strike and the population were suffering thereby.

Do you think the State has the same right over landholders refusing to exercise the powers they hold?—Yes.

You and fellow landholders in the country hold perhaps a more important right than that—you could refuse to let the surface of your land for cultivation, could you not?—Yes; I have the perfect right to cultivate my own land.

FIGHTING "FOR THEIR COUNTRY"

To the agent of the Duke of Hamilton this pitiless cross examiner said:

I think you will agree that, within a radius of 10 or 15 miles of Hamilton Palace, a very considerable number of men and boys left the coal pits and went into His Majesty's Service?—I hope they went from all parts of the country.

A very large number went from the collieries from which the Duke of Hamilton is claiming mineral royalties?—No doubt.

In many cases their families were not too well off when the father or the sons were away?—It was a common experience.

Was it not to defend their country they went abroad?—Doubtless.

In what sense did any of them possess any of their country?—They were citizens.

Is it not remarkable to ask people to defend their country if they really don't own a single acre of it?—I do not think the possession of acreage is necessarily a corollary of the rights or duties of citizenship.

Very neatly did Mr. Smillie turn the tables on Lord Tredegar. For if much of the lands of these lords trace their titles back to ancestors who received them as a reward of service in the wars, then "by the same token," as our Celtic friends would say, those who rendered service in this war are entitled to a similar return.

Further questioned by MR. SMILLIE, Lord Tredegar said he had been a naval officer for four and a half years. He was aware that a very large number of miners left the district and joined the Army. He did not think military service entitled a man to land when he came back. He was not sure if the sailors and soldiers wanted it.

MR. SMILLIE: You don't think that service for the country is a justification for expecting to get land? Would you believe that a large number of the landlords in this country claim that the largest amount of land they possess was given by kings for service rendered in the war?—In some cases it may have been.

Are you aware that 200,000 acres have been granted by kings to persons for service rendered in war; and, if so, why do you say that common people, colliers and other workmen, have no right to expect such rewards?—If land is available, by all means let them have it.

MR. SMILLIE: It only becomes available if taken away from you.