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Current Comment

IT will be a different world politically when the war is ended. But more emphatically it will be a different world economically and socially. Whether the tremendous upheaval, the confused play and interplay of new forces and of old currents reinforced, shall result in readjustments along the line of justice and stable forms of economic life, will depend largely on how far Single Taxers are able to influence legislation.

We are adopting many measures for the winning of the war that we must be rid of once the war is ended. But we shall meet an opposition to the removal of these measures that will, as a result of the war, be powerfully consolidated. The world will change, but the great conflict between liberty and privilege will present much the same aspect. It was Anatole France who said "the more it changes the more it is the same thing," and this is true of the "irrepressible conflict" between the forces of liberty and privilege.

We shall have a new and intense nationalism, and this will reinforce the economic institutions that must be destroyed or modified if civilization is to endure; we shall find protectionism and the doctrine of restriction further emphasized in political preachments. With price-fixing and regulation we shall have grown dangerously familiar; the partnership of business and government, rather than the marriage of government and liberty, will hold out insidious promises of betterment.

To this new trend or old trend reinforced, socialism will lend its fatuous assistance with glib and appealing phrase. After thirty years of agitation the Single Tax movement should be in a position to combat this tendency, to influence public opinion in the direction of the goal of freedom; and perhaps our influence will not be found lacking if we can satisfy the thinking men and women of the nation that we are neither fanatics nor tax-tinkerers, but have a real and practical programme of social reconstruction—sane yet radical, and going to the very fundamentals of economic life.

GR^EAT Britain will face the same problems as we. Already various commissions, the Associated Chambers of Commerce of England and the Empire Producers Association—high sounding names of influential organizations—are supporting the agitation for government assistance by discriminating tariffs of the production within the empire of such raw materials as cotton. Of course this is not good news for our own cotton planting industry of the South, but neither is it good news for the cotton manufacturing industries of Great Britain, nor for the consumers of that country. Great Britain's exports are more valuable

to her industrial life than any artificial stimulation of raw cotton, or any other "raw material." But that she will see this aspect of the question there is no positive assurance. Plausible are the pleas of the protectionists, very gullible are the people, and very difficult is the doctrine of economic freedom—difficult because simple. Here is the opportunity for the Land Values group in Parliament, and they are not likely to lose sight of it. Free trade must go further or fare worse—it must go to the man in the street with the message of Henry George that free trade means free production, the freedom to use the earth and the freedom to retain the product without a tax of any sort.

THERE is no lack of prophesy in these days, of Cassandra-like warnings of social and economic upheavals after the war. Neither is there lack of prophesy of another and better sort. Thus Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster, in a recent address, said: "During the war the minds of people have been profoundly altered. Dull acquiescence in social injustice has given way to active discontent. The very foundations of political and social life, of our economic system, of morals and religion are being closely scrutinized. . . . Our institutions, it is felt, must justify themselves at the bar of reason. They can no longer be taken for granted."

This declaration recalls in its broad and liberal spirit the best traditions of another distinguished English prelate of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Manning.

DR. Harry A. Garfield has also committed himself to prophesy, and he, too, does it well. We would welcome his utterances if we could be assured that they really stand for anything. What, for instance, does Dr. Garfield mean by "the spirit of autocracy in our economic life"? Does he have in mind the autocratic bearing of some individual employer to his employee? Or does he refer to institutional autocracy? Has he in mind special privilege conferred by law; is he thinking of our land system, of our tariff and taxation systems? What a world of difference in the words if he is or is not thinking of these things!

"There will be a war after the war, but it will be along lines wholly different from those had in mind by the framers of that unfriendly statement. After the war is finished, when peace shall have come, the conflict that will engage our young men now under arms will be the conflict against the spirit of autocracy in our political, economic and social life."

REPRESENTATIVE NICHOLAS LONGWORTH has not hitherto shown any particular tenderness for earned incomes nor any special antipathy toward unearned incomes. But he says:

"It is bad enough that no discrimination is made in this

or any income tax law passed by Congress in recent years in favor of earned as distinguished from unearned incomes. In every other country, so far as I am aware, where an income tax has been for some time a part of its fiscal policy, earned incomes are taxed at less rate than unearned incomes. Surely this is the correct principle."

If Congressman Longworth will pursue this subject further it will land him into conclusions whose existence he little suspects. He is treading on dangerous ground.

IN an article from ex-Congressman Kent in that often brilliant but not always sound periodical, *Everyman*, of Los Angeles, the writer is permitted to say, without editorial disclaimer:

"I do not believe that if Henry George had lived he would have confined his revenue system to the taxation of land, either as abstractly perfect or concretely feasible, and I think he would have recognized the fact that after taxing all the rental value out of land and forcing the owner of the land to the trouble of cashing his crops, and turning in taxes, no benefit of holding title would appear. Just as millions of acres of chopped over timber land have been permitted to revert to the State rather than to irritate the owner with taxation charges, in the same way this taxing of the unearned increment would eventually throw the land back to the taxing community. The taxation plan would be self-destructive and a leasing system would take its place, an evolution to be devoutly sought, and one only to be reached through taxation or revolution."

Of course it is not proposed to tax the rental value *out* of land, nor would a resort to exclusive land value taxation to the point of absorption of the entire rental value replace the present system of land holding by a leasing system. (See *Single Tax Year Book*, page 221.)

THE editor of the *Meridian* (Miss.) *Dispatch* commenting on the *SINGLE TAX YEAR BOOK*, has this to say:

"But we cannot quite see why it is necessary to go to the extreme of asserting that 'men ought not to be compelled to pay other men for the use of land.' The idea is too revolutionary for calm consideration. It would necessitate a complete readjustment of all living conditions and all civic relationships. Why cannot the Single Tax idea in its more moderate phases be introduced, making land the single basis of taxation, and then allow the equalizing or distribution of the burden to proceed naturally through the channels of rents and profits, until it is eventually absorbed or taken up (without perpetrating individual injustice), throughout all the grades and conditions of society?"

If Mr. Metcalf will go with us that far he is a quite good enough Single Taxer. That is the way of approach, of course. To achieve the goal is the aim, but the direction we are going is the important thing. Mr. Metcalf is headed right.

KNOW the grim truth. All the blood; all the heroism; all the money, all the munitions in the world will not win this war, unless our allies and the people behind them

are fed. They will not be fed, and our sacrifice of blood and money will be in vain, and a great cause sustain a great injury, unless each one in his home, each day, stands guard over the nation's supply of wheat, meat, fats and sugar."
(United States Food Control Board)

Very good, so far as it goes.

But is this the whole truth? Has the Food Control Board nothing to say about the attitude of our government toward food production and distribution, as exhibited in that most potent function of the government, its fiscal legislation, the "Law of Laws," as it has so often been called?

The members of the Board must know that our fiscal system penalizes, directly and indirectly, the production of wheat, meat, fats and sugar, and favors the withholding of land, labor and capital from the production of those necessities, thus encouraging what, under the circumstances, can only be described as "passive treason." It was surely, therefore, the first and most obvious duty of the Board to memorialize the national and State Congresses, calling for the immediate removal of every fiscal obstacle to the efficient production and distribution of food and all else that can contribute to the success of our nation and its allies in the present grave emergency.

Ignorance of elementary economic laws has, indeed, made us, as community and nation, participants and accomplices in acts which, as individuals, we instinctively recognize to be immoral and unpatriotic.

The knowledge of the whole truth, which covers national as well as individual duty, takes nothing from the grimness of the partial truth expounded by the Food Control Board.

CONSCRIPTION of labor would meet the united opposition of labor. Labor would argue this way: If you are going to conscript idle labor, you must at the same time conscript idle capital. Put every dollar that is lying idle at work, and then we will not oppose your forcing every idle man to work, whether he likes the conditions or not. Take all the millions, all the billions, not actually in use and put them in circulation. Then, and only then, can you force all men to unwilling labor."—CHARLES B. BARNES, Director of the N. Y. State Bureau of Employment and President of the American Association of Employment Offices.

The ownership of land is not, and does not represent any economic function. It is a purely parasitic growth, absorbing values, creating none. For its sustenance, it demands more than is required to maintain all our governments—national, State and municipal.

And yet, Labor and Capital uncomplainingly submit to the exaction; and spend their time and energies in harassing each other. They fail to understand their essential solidarity of interests against their common spoiler.

When the leaders of Labor and Capital come to realize this simple, elementary fact in our economic situation, we may expect some fundamental readjustments. Meanwhile the attitude of Labor and Capital amply justifies the charge

that has been made, that we are a "nation of economic illiterates."

The humor of the situation is that the landed interest, forestalling the government, has already conscripted Labor and Capital, to the apparent satisfaction of both.

THE white man is land hungry—not gold hungry, but land hungry; and the Indian, in seeking a piece of land, is always at a disadvantage with the white man."

March 3, 1918.

SENATOR ASHURST.

While pleading for a few thousand landless California Indians, the worthy senator seemed to forget the millions of landless white men, his own fellow citizens. These landless white men are also land hungry. What keeps them from the land? The senator might, with profit, seek the reason.

Equity demands that the right to hold land be conditioned by the capacity and will to make adequate use of it.

The adjustment of the sum of fiscal obligations in strict proportion to the value, or economic potentiality, of land is the most practical instrument known for making effective the above demand of equity. The enforcement of fiscal obligations so adjusted engages the will of the holder to assist his capacity in order to make adequate use of the land, while the amount of the obligation influences his judgment to choose land adapted to his capacity.

A Vision that is Also a Promise and a Call to Action

(From a message addressed by President Wilson to the Democrats of New Jersey, March 21st, 1918)

EVERY sign of these terrible days of war and revolutionary change, when economic and social forces are being released upon the world whose effect no political seer dare venture to conjecture, bids us search our heart through and through and make them ready for the birth of a new day, a day we hope and believe of greater opportunity and greater prosperity for the average mass of struggling men and women and of greater safety and opportunity for their children.

"The old party slogans have lost their significance and will mean nothing to the voter of the future, for the war is certain to change the mind of Europe as well as the mind of America.

"Men everywhere are searching democratic principles in their hearts in order to determine their soundness, their sincerity, their adaptability to the real needs of their life, and every man with any vision must see that the real test of justice and right action is presently to come as it never came before.

"The men in the trenches, who have been freed from the economic serfdom to which some of them have been accustomed, will, it is likely, return to their homes with a new view and a new impatience of all mere political phrases, and will demand real thinking and sincere action.

"The days of political and economic reconstruction which are ahead of us no man can now definitely assess, but we know this, that every programme must be shot through and through with utter disinterestedness—that no party must try to serve itself, but every party must try to serve humanity, and that the task is a very practical one, meaning that every programme must be tested by this question, and this question only:

"Is it just; is it for the benefit of the average man without influence or privilege; does it embody in real fact the highest conception of social justice and of right dealing, without respect of person or class, or particular interest?

"This is a high test.

"It can be met only by those who have genuine sympathy with the mass of men, and real insight into their needs and opportunities and a purpose which is purged alike of selfish and of partisan intention."

WOODROW WILSON.

THE VISION. A future of freedom, equal justice and economic security for all.

THE PROMISE. The supreme head of the nation has spoken and his words must have voiced a purpose of action.

THE CALL. Simple economic justice would increase tenfold our people's strength, and never was that strength more needed than today. The call, therefore, is imperative for immediate action to end our fiscal disorder and economic injustice. The future hangs on today.

The Compulsory Work Law of New Jersey

(CHAP. 55, LAWS OF 1918)

TO assure the habitual and regular employment, in some useful, lawful and recognized business, profession, occupation, trade or employment, of all able-bodied male residents of this State, between the ages of eighteen and fifty years inclusive," is, according to Lewis Bryant, Commissioner of Labor, the immediate purpose of the Compulsory Work Law of New Jersey, issued by proclamation on the 8th day of March of the current year.

"All persons similarly circumstanced shall, so far as physically possible to do so, be treated alike, after taking into consideration the age, physical condition, and other appropriate circumstances." . . . "A reasonable and proper administration of the Act will make necessary a more or less individual determination of each case presented."

After mentioning several special cases and presenting a list of occupations which appear to him the "more essential during the stress of war conditions," the Commissioner concludes, with a statement revealing the full purpose of the law:

"If this Act is to be made the useful adjunct to the adequate mobilization of man power of the State, necessary to the successful prosecution of the war, the fullest cooperation and assistance on the part of the State, county and municipal authorities must be afforded, and in turn the Commissioner of Labor gives the assurance that the