

real estate is the basis of all that is best." This is noteworthy as the first admission ever made on the real estate pages of Cleveland newspapers that land is at all necessary for homes!

HON. JAMES A. FREER, member of Congress from Wisconsin, took occasion on March 17 to quote from the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW* in a debate on the Bonus Bill. He is one of the foremost progressive Republicans of the House of Representatives, and has the honor of making what the *REVIEW* considers the ablest attack on the Sales Tax made in the House. This tax he properly characterizes as "a war tax in time of peace." It is a pity that Congressman Freer, who sees some small things with admirable clearness, cannot view the big things with the same brilliant understanding.

A Great Problem Solved

PROFESSOR STEPHEN LEACOCK of McGill University, Canada, who is known to economists as an author of humorous stories, and to humorists as a teacher of political economy, has unfolded to a waiting world the secret of restored prosperity. In an article published in *Collier's* recently, he contributes this important thought: "The way to promote prosperity is to start going again the machinery of bold productive effort." Had this profound contribution to the world's stock of information been made by a mere economist it would have been laughed at. If made by a humorist it would have been accepted as another proof that when real wisdom is needed advice should be sought from the makers of mirth. When made by one who is professionally both a humorist and an economist it is certain to evoke the comments: "How true!" and "How interesting!"

It is deeply to be regretted that having told the world what it must do in order to escape from the almost universal condition of industrial depression, Professor Leacock did not go a little further and explain just how this machinery of bold productive effort can be set going, or, rather, kept going. For it was going at full speed, not so long ago. The farms, mills, factories, mines, railways, stores, and all other parts of the machinery of production and distribution, are still in existence. There is an abundance of labor and directing ability. The work of producing wealth was done well, so well, indeed, that it seems that far more goods were produced than there is an effective demand for. The manufacturer says that he cannot keep his "bold productive effort" going because the merchants do not buy enough of his products. The merchant is willing and anxious to sell, but says that the consumers are not buying on their normal scale. The consumer says that high prices, high rents and high taxes, largely the result of the world war, have so reduced his purchasing power that he cannot pay for many things that he urgently needs. So it would appear that the problem is not that of productive effort, for all the goods that can be sold under present conditions are either

stored up or are being manufactured, but of consuming power.

The fact that Professor Leacock is the author of a number of very clever parodies suggests that he may be making fun of the solemn platitudes of the professorial economists who have been wrestling with the problem of industrial depression. This is possible, yet his remedy for involuntary idleness lacks something of true parody in that it does not convey a hint of its absurdity. The language is not an imitation of a college professor trying to say something new or true about an important question. It is exactly what all the rest of the economists have been saying. Can it be that they are all engaged in making fun of each other's pretension to knowledge? And is Professor Leacock gently "spoofing" them, as those Canadians say?

The Single Tax and Russian Socialism

FOR five years a form of government has existed in Russia which has challenged the social order of the rest of the world. Fearing the spread of the ideas upon which that government was based, so-called civilized countries in general have stupidly striven to prevent their citizens or subjects from acquiring accurate knowledge concerning the new departure. In acting thus, they displayed that shortsightedness which is one of their leading characteristics, for they sharpened the desire for knowledge as to what was happening to about 200,000,000 people, overlooking the obvious fact that some day the cat would get out of the bag.

Well, one of the consequences of the Genoa Conference is that the cat is out of the bag and it looks as if it would be impossible to re-bag it. The world now knows what Lenin, Trotsky and their Socialist confreres tried and failed to do and to the extent of current information on the subject is justified in believing that few other nations will seek to follow their example. We use the word Socialist in connection with the Russian experiment because it was and is a Socialist programme that has governed the venture. We are not familiar with the Russian language, but we believe we are correct in stating that Bolshevism meant merely Majority Socialism as distinct from Menshevism, which meant Minority Socialism. The Bolshevik leaders were and remain doctrinaire Marxists, and their whole effort proceeded along lines which they believe he would have approved. Therefore, whatever success they have achieved may be justly claimed by Socialists as a vindication of their programme and wherein they have failed must be accepted as the failure of their method.

We will endeavor to sum up as briefly as possible the main policies which have been enacted into law by Soviet decree.

1. The abolition of private ownership of property, or perhaps it may be put more clearly, the assumption of the ownership of all property, real and personal, in Russia, by

the Soviet government. This action was going a step beyond Marx who advocated only the government confiscation of capital.

2. The devolution into the hands of the peasants and industrial workers of the personalty, land and industrial property so acquired, to be operated by them as agents for the Soviet government, to which all surplus production, over and above the necessary maintenance charges of the operators, was to belong.

3. The establishment of a government based upon the votes of the proletariat, by which is meant solely organized labor, as not only are the bourgeois excluded but the peasants also, it being frankly admitted that the peasants are too ignorant to be properly class-conscious and their admission to the polls would "throw all the fat in the fire." Substantially, then, the Soviet government is based upon that very limited part of the Russian population which prior to or since the war was or has been enrolled in the ranks of organized labor.

4. The creation of a body of secret police known as the Cheka whose function it is to suppress by "whatever means may be found necessary" all agitation against the existing Soviet government and its leaders. It displays in high degree that intolerance of criticism not to speak of opposition, which has ever been characteristic of the Socialist mind. We hold no brief for the so-called capitalist system under which we live (though we do wish that people would give its proper designation of the *privilegist* system, which it really is), but we say without hesitancy that it has never shown a tithe of the callousness and brutality in the suppression of criticism and freedom of speech, which the Russian Socialist Government habitually exemplifies.

5. The dilution of money—paper money of course—to an extent which renders it practically worthless and puts all exchange of commodities back into the primitive system of barter. It has been found impossible to dispense with money and yet it has been reduced to a condition of such impotence that it is almost valueless.

Doubtless there are people in the world who are surprised at this bankruptcy of Socialist philosophy and some who attribute the hideous pass to which it has brought things in Russia to the machination of Russia's external enemies, but Single Taxers will not share their sentiments. For forty years we have pointed out the illogicality of the Socialist programme and have tried to make clear that whether its purposes are desirable or not, in practice its machinery would not work. We could not have hoped for so complete a demonstration of the correctness of our position as the Russian Socialist State has furnished, and so horrible has been the suffering entailed upon the Russian people that we could hardly have wished for the demonstration to take so hideous a form.

Now we see the masters of Russia inviting the exploitation of Russia by foreigners, crying out to the hated capitalists to save the nation from the consequences of the

application of Socialist principles. But what sort of bargains can be made with men, who deny the natural rights of man to his product, who deny to a vast majority of their fellows participation in the government, who base on naked force all order and system. Granted that the Czarist regime had no higher moral sanction, was it worth while to wade through seas of blood to set up a system having no higher justification.

Of their work, in the long run, only one evidence will remain, the land of Russia has been restored to the peasants and no power seems likely to arise to take it back from them. But even this result has been accomplished in a manner likely to bring upon Russia, many of the evils which a similar policy pursued in France after what used to be called the "Great Revolution," entailed upon that country. Peasant proprietorship, which does not impose upon the farmer a recognition of the duty to the community which goes with possession of the land, may develop evils as menacing as our present form of landlordism. That this institution lies at the root of the dry rot which seems to have set in in France seems to be the opinion of many of the wisest French philosophers of our time.

We venture the prediction that as the Bolshevist experiment develops, it will be found that its chief contribution to human progress will be its exemplification of the policies to be avoided by nations who wish to improve their social conditions and its complete and triumphant refutation of the sophistries of Karl Marx and his followers.

A Graduated Land Tax

PROF. JOHN R. COMMONS has long enjoyed an international reputation as a practical economist and scientific student of the relations between labor and capital. He has at times experienced the fate of those, who, being too honest intellectually to gloss over the faults of either of the contending parties, become the targets of both. He has not been unaware of the Single Tax philosophy, but it occupied a minor place in his mind, and it is therefore encouraging to find him showing a larger appreciation of its importance than he has done in the past.

In the *Political Science Quarterly*, March 1922, he presents in the form of an article of about twenty pages an argument in favor of the Grimstad Bill which proposed to impose a progressive tax on bare land values in the State of Wisconsin. The bill was considered by the lower House of the Wisconsin Legislature and received the votes of eighteen farmers. It contemplated a surtax on holdings of real estate in excess of \$10,000 bare land value, which would mean that improved farm or urban property would be exempt from the surtax to the extent of \$25,000.00 for any one holding.

Clearly the purpose of such a measure is to break up those great land holdings, which so seriously menace the development of many of the States. As a move in the right direction and as a means of combatting a recognized evil, Single Taxers in Wisconsin may find the measure