

THE FAILURE OF THE ECONOMISTS

By Arthur H. Weller, J.P.

Thoughtful people are beginning to ask why the economists have failed to explain the economic problems of unemployment and trade depression.

Mr Lloyd George declares that unemployment and trade depression are due to the production of too much wealth, or, to paraphrase his own picturesque language, people are hungry because there is too much bread in the cupboard. Lord d'Abernon refutes the over-production theory and describes the trade crisis as a crisis of currency. Mr T. S. Ashton writes interestingly about a gold shortage and attributes unemployment to the rigidity of wages in face of falling prices. Mr Ramsay Muir believes there is no single infallible cure for our distress and that what is needed is a many-sided attack upon a many-sided problem. Evidently Mr Muir has overlooked the bottom-side of the problem—the land question. Professor Clay thinks we have not adapted ourselves to changed conditions by wage reductions, etc., and fears that even when the world recovers from the trade collapse we shall probably be in no better case than before it began. An economist in Australia, Mr D. B. Copland, where depreciation of the currency already means a loss of 5½ million pounds on a debt contracted in London, advocates a further depreciation to 20 per cent and foretells many advantages from that policy.

And now we find two economists, Mr J. A. Hobson and Mr J. M. Keynes, who are more or less in agreement. Mr Hobson tells us that our economic ills arise because we, as a community, save too much and spend too little. The only remedy, he asserts, is a more equal and equitable distribution of wealth which would increase the spending powers of the workers. But this "remedy" brings us no nearer to the solution of the problem; it is no more helpful than would be advice to a victim of paralysis to the effect that the remedy for his helplessness was to regain the use of his limbs. Mr Keynes, like Mr Hobson, favours spending more and saving less. On this principle he suggests that the whole of South London from Westminster to Greenwich should be pulled down, replanned and rebuilt. That would employ men, he argues. It would; it would do more, as may be judged by another London improvement scheme which, for obvious reasons, has not materialized. The Charing Cross Bridge scheme, which includes bridge building, slum clearing and rehousing, was to cost £16,865,000. Out of that sum no less than £11,126,000 was to pay for permission from the land-owners to make the improvement (land purchase), and the remaining £5,739,000 would be spent on wages and materials. In varying degrees, all work-providing schemes have similar results—great gain to the land-owners and heavy taxation on the community.

LONDON THEATRE RENTS.—The way in which rents have gone up is illustrated by the Shaftesbury Theatre, which, during the first seven years of its 21 years' lease, cost £6,000 a year, during the second seven years £7,000, and during the third seven years £8,000. Its rent to-day is from £450 to £500 a week, and then there are also the bars. Not many years ago the rent of the Duke of York's was £80, now it is about £400.

"Producers are nearly all broke," said a prominent producer yesterday, "it is the landlords who are making the money."—*Sunday Express*, 15th February.

"DERELICT ACRES"

"Five million cultivable acres of the land of England are more or less derelict, and this land will never come back to cultivation, the people will never be restored, whatever fiscal support may be forthcoming from Government, if the work is left to landowner and tenant. Some land only is near derelict. It is utter and pernicious nonsense to lament over the decay of husbandry. In the large there is no agricultural depression. The green and grassy western part of England is not greatly depressed, nor are the ups and downs natural to the farmer's profession steeper or wider than they used to be. Everywhere the more naturally fertile fields produce their quantum of real wealth. . . . General agricultural depression is a bogey."—From *Why the Land Dies* by Sir Wm. Beach Thomas (Faber and Faber, 1s.).

THE I.L.P.

The National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party have issued a programme on National Finance recommending measures to be included in the forthcoming Budget. The second item reads: "Taxation of urban and building land values."

THE POSTAL WORKERS

Mr J. T. Hastings, Carlisle, writes that at the local branch of the Union of Postal Workers on 15th February, the following resolution was agreed upon for submission to the Annual Conference of Postal Workers to be held at Aberdeen in May, and that it should be placed on the agenda:—

"This Conference recommends all delegates to study 'The Taxation of Land Values,' otherwise the teachings of Henry George, author of that great book—*Progress and Poverty*.

"The subject is non-political and non-sectarian. It shows how the *real wages* of the people cannot be obtained until the 'Law of Rent' in relation to the distribution of wealth is understood."

ARCHIBALD MacNEILAGE

Our press publicity department has lost one of its best friends in the death of Mr Archibald MacNeilage, editor and manager of the *Scottish Farmer* since its inception in 1893. He was a talented journalist and a recognized authority on agriculture in all its branches. Week by week in his influential journal he voiced his opinions and tendered his advice in unqualified terms. There was style, character and education in all his writing. In the columns of the *Scottish Farmer* devoted to correspondence, he gave generous space to letters in support of land value taxation and real free trade, compared with other journals.

Mr MacNeilage was for years a member of the Glasgow Educational Authority, and from 1891 was the capable organizer of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Agricultural Discussion Society. He had many other public interests and his co-workers marvelled how he found time to give such unremitting service. His guiding principle seemed to be "Work is Worship."

One who knew him best writes: "He preached the gospel of hard work and he practised it to the full. He had the pen of a ready writer and spoke with ease. He seldom repeated himself and could interest an audience, bucolic or artisan, religious or profane. How he got through so much is a complete mystery, and he died as he wished—in harness."

We extend our sincerest sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

J. P.