

Mr. Mackendrick, Mr. Busby, and "E. P. D." on the Dunedin Report; in the YORKSHIRE OBSERVER by Mr. J. K. Musgrave, on the "Ethics of Profit Making"; in REYNOLDS'S NEWSPAPER and the EDINBURGH EVENING NEWS by Mr. W. J. Hawkes on the Labour Question and on Housing; by "J. P." in the Ayr OBSERVER on "Land Values and Land Transport"; by Mr. T. E. Davies in the SOUTH WALES NEWS on the Labour Party and Landlordism; by Mr. W. Moore in the SHEFFIELD INDEPENDENT; by Mr. F. Skirrow in the LEEDS WEEKLY CITIZEN; by Mr. F. C. Potter in the DAILY HERALD; and by Mr. A. Munsie in the GLASGOW NEWS, GLASGOW CITIZEN, SCOTTISH FARMER, and other papers.

May we again remind our numerous corresponding secretaries and all who are engaged in this effective Press work to send us newspaper clippings of articles and letters as they appear? It is important that we should be able to record such activity and so encourage more and more effort of the kind.

NEW SOUTH WALES

SYDNEY RATING

The STANDARD (Sydney) of 15th April reports that the Finance Committee of the Sydney City Council has decided in favour of continuing the present system of deriving the whole city rate revenue from rates levied on the value of land alone. Finance was reviewed by the General Purposes Committee on 10th April, and the land value rates were reduced from 5d. to 4½d. in the £. The value of land (apart from improvements) is assessed at £35,842,421 selling value. [We may remark that this is the assessment of the City of Sydney, exclusive of the 40 municipalities within the Metropolitan area.—EDITOR L. & L.]

Alderman Hagon moved that some part of the rates be imposed on the old basis of land and improvements, but he was defeated on a non-party division by 14 votes to 7.

NEW SOUTH WALES VALUATION

In New South Wales, by the Valuation of Land Act, 1916, a separate and independent department of State was established with the special function of determining the values of land for all public purposes. The local authorities had hitherto made their own valuations and in many places the work was done in a slipshod fashion. That is now being remedied by the Valuation Department, but with its small staff it can only make progress slowly. The STANDARD now reports that up to 31st December, 1921, the Valuation Department had re-assessed 36 local governing areas, 23 in the Metropolitan area, eight in the Newcastle district, and five in the country. The result has been a big increase over the assessments made by the local councils. The land value assessment over the 36 areas has been increased 42 per cent. In some districts it was discovered that local landed interests had been deliberately favoured and thousands of acres were found that had never been valued at all. We are glad to see that the Valuer-General is rectifying such abuses.

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE

"It is well known that the suppression of any industry will throw those who practise it into other channels. Joseph saw that the suppression of agriculture carried on continuously over nearly a century had caused the rural population to migrate to the towns, and had given a steady stream of applicants for industrial occupations. How could the tide be swept the other way, and what would be its consequences? It was clear to him that agriculture, in countries where the common people prosper, is not merely one occupation amongst many others, but the great alternative to all industry. Let the conditions for its practice be advantageous as compared with the trades, let the land demand workers and pay them adequately for their work; the consequence would be seen immediately in the withdrawal of the labour surplus in the industrial market. And that desirable state of affairs would be reached in which employers would compete for labourers, instead of labourers competing for the privilege of obtaining a job at rates that barely keep them and their families from the verge of starvation."

From THE LIFE OF JOSEPH FELS, by Mary Fels (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London. 6s. net).—A book that should be in the library of every Single Taxer. Obtain your copy from the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, 11 Tothill Street, London, S.W.1.

UNUSED DEMOCRACY

Higher Wages, Better Business, Practical Ends for Wise Workers and Good Citizens

By HARRY H. WILLOCK (Pittsburgh, U.S.A.).

[We gladly reproduce, in part, this illuminating statement of the case for Economic Democracy. It is a contribution to the thought of the day on social problems which ought to command the widest publicity. It is from the pen of an able advocate and tireless worker in the United States, and has been issued in pamphlet form by the Single Tax League of San Antonio, Texas. Over half a million copies have been issued.]

We are trying to bury war. The world is beginning a new epoch. More conclusively than ever before "Old things have passed away—all things have become new." Not even the great Reformation changed the thought of the world so profoundly as did the few war years. Czars, kaisers, emperors have faded away and their places will not be filled. "The future belongs to the people."

Britain has shown the world how a king may linger in the drawing-room and yet in no way affect the democratic political life of the people. With her king and all her traditional conservatism Britain is more democratic in thought, politics and industry than we are with our President, and that fact should bring home to every thoughtful American citizen that it is only the substance which matters and not the form. Americans have mistaken "opportunity" for "democracy" and have been satisfied with the husks of form instead of going after the real thing itself.

With few exceptions and with the fervour of ignorant unthinking patriots, we have applauded suppressions of free speech and free assemblage, apparently forgetting that without unlimited freedom of speech and freedom to assemble, as guaranteed by the Constitution, it is not possible for political democracy to function. Political democracy becomes valuable only when its fundamentals are understood and its liberties granted and accepted by a substantial majority of the citizenship in order that the public mind is not absorbed in attacking and defending these fundamentals themselves, but may be directed towards using political democracy as an instrument for obtaining industrial democracy as well as that goal—economic democracy. A republic such as America without complete freedom of speech and assembly fails and tyranny reigns.

Most attacks on civil liberties, which are the very breath of life to political democracy, are instigated by those subtle enemies of all democracy and those defenders of privilege who, though comparatively small in numbers, by hypocritically cloaking their activities in a patriotic garb with skilful flag waving, humbug the multitude into fighting against the real interests of the people. History teaches that the people have always fought the battles for autocracy and for privilege against themselves; have bled and died for their oppressors. Will we ever learn?

The new faith—industrial democracy—now looked forward to with such hope by the workers and benevolent employers alike, is of little value in itself and can only be expected to serve as it brings capital and labour to a realization of their utter dependence on economic democracy. Industrial democracy—desirable and necessary as it is—will still leave the source of all wealth in the hands of the world junkers, who will continue the levy of an increasing toll on the wages of capital and labour alike. Just so long as land ownership is undemocratized we will not realize economic democracy and the employed and employer alike will be in the power of the land-owner, the real junker of America as well as of Prussia, who absorbs most of the profit of industry without contributing either the labour or the tools.

Many wise thinkers look for a great measure of relief

from co-operation in distribution and from public ownership of those natural monopolies known as public utilities, but they will be sorely disappointed. Desirable as these things are, helpful as they certainly will be and necessary as we know them to be, they will avail but little if the land-owner is left with the power to absorb, in increased land values and rents, all of their benefits to the social order. The ever-growing pressure for radical change may be expected to continue with increasing force and bitterness until this monster Frankenstein is done away with, and when it passes, most of the ground will be cut from under the radical labour leader and the left wing socialist.

Blackstone teaches as a fundamental of the common law that holding of title to land (including minerals, forests and waters) and the appropriation of the increase in value due to the community is not a right inherent in the individual, but a privilege granted by the State or nation and true economic democracy demands that no such privilege be granted to any citizen without proper payment to the nation. It must be remembered that title deeds are nothing more than perpetual leases from the State, subject to an annual charge (tax), changing each year at the will of the representatives of the people and the only reason title deeds to land have any value is because the State has never made a sufficient charge for the privilege granted. . . .

When the State takes the entire rental value of land there will remain no capital value in land, just as a bond would have no value if all the income were taken by taxation. Land in use, however, would still be desirable as no land can be used without having been improved at least to some extent—clearing, draining, fertilizing, cultivating, fencing or building—and the rental value taken by the State would not include that portion of the rent due to the improvements.

The cry of "confiscation" will doubtless be raised, but that will not be true. Not confiscation, but restoration. If a man bought a colt, broke it and worked it a year, and then it was proven that the colt was stolen property, would the colt be confiscated or restored when returned to the rightful owner? Who would condemn the return of the colt to the rightful owner, without payment, as confiscation? The case for land is still stronger, as every owner of land well knew when he bought it that he got no guarantee as to what the annual tax would be. It might be two per cent, or six per cent—whatever the taxing power (the people) decide. The using land-owner is still better off than the owner of the colt as he retains the land on payment of a proper rental (tax) and the payment of this tax will make it unnecessary for him to pay the other "57 varieties" of taxes which now plague him. The user of land as a farmer, merchant, manufacturer or home owner would pay less tax than under the present system. Nations claim and enforce the right to conscript men to defend their country in time of war, but such claims are not valid in equity and neither are they moral so long as 90 per cent of the land is held by 10 per cent of the men who pay no adequate return for the privilege they enjoy and who, by reason of this privilege, hold the workers of the nation in practical serfdom, thus forcing the workers into labour unions which keep the whole nation something akin to an armed camp. We had no labour unions until there was a reason for them—until the accessible free land disappeared in the West in the late 70's and early 80's.

The average man will say, however, "That is all very nice, but why should it interest me? I have a living to make and have nothing to pay taxes on," or "I am a merchant and I include my taxes in the price of the goods I sell. Let the other fellows worry about it." Right there is where the junker wants the "average" man to remain, and so long as he remains there the "average" man—employee or employer—will continue to be the dupe and at the same time he will be paying the greatest portion of the taxes (indirectly) and continuing to make it impossible

for even industrial democracy to materially or permanently better his social or living conditions.

The whole question of permanent high wages for the employee and permanent large profits for the employer, therefore, resolves itself into the question of permanently making jobs plentiful and this can only be done by proper taxation. Labour, despite all high-sounding words and fine moral theories, will always be bought and sold on the basis of supply and demand, unless we establish the socialist or communist State and then we will only have exchanged one sort of trouble for another sort. Labour tries to make work plentiful by reducing the hours of labour, while employers try to reduce wages by insisting on long working hours. Labour hopes to make jobs plentiful so the employer will bid wages up, while employers hope to make jobs scarce so that labour will bid wages down. Both in their ignorance of basic facts are working against their own best interests.

Wages—the price of labour—must in a free State fluctuate exactly as labour is plentiful or scarce, but we do not always see the comparatively small percentage that makes surplus or shortage. If a certain city requires one hundred carloads of potatoes a day to supply the normal demand and if for a period of ten days only ninety-five cars arrive daily, potatoes are scarce and prices high, while if for the same period one hundred and five cars should arrive daily, potatoes would be plentiful and prices low. This accounts in great part for the curiously sudden fluctuations of prices. . . .

The many schemes to drain the swamps and irrigate the deserts are so futile, such poor business and so utterly inadequate that the wonder is that so many people are deceived by them. Thousands of acres might be reclaimed, but what would be the use when millions of acres, much of which is immediately adjacent to our great centres of population, are ready for immediate occupancy, furnishing abundant labour for all possible demands now and for years to come.

When we use our political democracy to demand that the State take all the community created rental value of land to pay the expenses of the State, no one will desire, or could be compelled, to own more land than he can use productively, any more than one would now rent an office or a dwelling or a factory or a farm and permit it to remain vacant or only partially used. Not a third of the available area of America and not half the area of our cities is in any adequate use. When all the rental value of land is taken by the State, the great portion of unused land will pass from private to public ownership and immediately become a national asset instead of a national liability, as it now is. This land in the public hands would be held for the private possession of the individual who desired to put it to use, paying to the State therefor only the annual tax (rental value but no purchase price) and receiving a title deed therefor to be recorded according to present practice. Such vacant land in the public hands would be available to homesteaders for residence and business purposes even in our cities, while thousands of acres adjacent to our large centres of population would be accessible for agricultural purposes. All taxes on business enterprise will be unnecessary, taxes on homes and farms will be greatly reduced and all business activity permanently stimulated.

America then could support in plenty, and entirely beyond the shadow of involuntary poverty, a population of a billion people, without any fear of losing the great stabilizer—free land, and also without having half as many people per square mile as Belgium. Privilege would be largely abolished and every man would be a real producer. There would be undreamed of production, as every worker would be on the land working for himself or in industry working for a maximum wage, which he could not get if he did not produce. Thousands of men in industry would go on the land adjacent to our cities with their women and children,

many of whom are now doing industrial work; this would lessen the labour pressure and give better wages to those who remain in industry, and their surplus garden products and fruits raised in immediate proximity to thousands of consumers would make impossible a continuation of the present monopoly of produce markets. At the same time it would form a great reservoir of reserve labour for seasonable occupation, or to fill in during periods of tremendous industrial activity when wages sufficiently attractive could be offered to draw people away temporarily from the work on their own land. Jobs would be permanently plentiful and workers would be permanently scarce with resulting high wages and steady employment for workers and good business with good profits for employers in supplying the increased demands of a people with a much greater per capita buying power than at present.

Under such conditions union wage agitation would fall of its own weight. The union wage is, under present conditions, absolutely necessary to give union labour directly, and all other labour indirectly, an approach to decent wages except in those rather rare instances where employers recognize the good business policy of paying more than the going rate. At the same time the union wage, which usually has to be fought for and won by a strike and which is unfair in demanding the same wage for all workers—good, bad and indifferent—is the greatest single cause of decreased per capita production. If the reader was a bricklayer capable of laying 1,400 bricks a day, how long would he do it when the next man was only capable of 800 bricks and received the same wages? The worker is only human, and no man can resist the tendency to slow up when greater effort does not produce greater returns and when at the same time a sense of injustice, as a result of industrial strife, rankles in his heart. He must have the feeling of a free man, and man cannot be free without free land. He must be free to work for himself or to work for an employer and nothing will give him this option but free land. He will then be coerced by neither the employer nor by his union. Workers have no more abstract moral right to fix a wage and enforce it by a strike than have business men to fix a price and enforce it by an "agreement in restraint of trade," but Congress has granted workers the legal right to fix a wage and enforce it by a strike and any political party will be swept out of office who attempts to take away this legal right so long as the workers are not free. These facts cannot be blinked, for without this right, in the absence of free land, the industrial workers to-day would be worse off as to physical well-being than the black slave previous to the Civil War.

The hustling, efficient worker would be able to earn more than the union wage if working on the land for himself and could, therefore, demand a high wage from industry, while the slacker, inefficient worker could not make so much on the land and would not be in a position to demand an unfair wage from industry. All, however, would be able to demand wages in proportion to what they produced, which would be perfect equity and on the whole a great stimulation to production. With all vacant land free to homestead without purchase price and all taxes abolished on improvements, the success of the "own your home" campaign would be assured, while at present it is largely nothing but a dream for the great mass of Americans, sixty per cent of whom are now tenants facing a steadily increasing rent, which will continue with increasing land values. Cheaper homes and lower rents are but idle fancies under present conditions. Most action against profiteers will be altogether futile until land monopoly, the great basic privilege, is destroyed, thus permitting production to reach its maximum. Lower rents, together with co-operation, will greatly reduce distributing costs.

Such are the very real and practical ends which may be attained by a free people using political democracy as a means to secure economic democracy—to democratize the land—which, together with human labour, is the basis of all wealth. This is Single Tax. Private possession of land will not be abolished and titles of land in adequate use will not be disturbed. This is not socialism. It is not Bolshevism. It is not communism. It is not anarchy. It is not confiscation. It requires no new governmental machinery. It will take nothing from anyone which he now earns. The honest income of no one will be reduced. Wages and legitimate profits will be increased. Profit for the few at the expense of the many will be practically abolished. No one will eat bread by the sweat of another man's brow. It will be possible for every one to have a home who really wants one. There will be fewer millionaires and fewer poor. Fewer limousines and more Fords. It will abolish the I.W.W. and tramps will become as rare as the "Dodo." It will benefit 100 per cent of us. A great tax burden will be lifted from the many and the few can live honest productive lives without preying on the many. We can have it any time enough of us use our political democracy. A constitutional amendment of only about ten lines is necessary—making all taxes unlawful until after the full rental value of all land (including minerals, forests and waters) has been taken for the needs of government (national, state, county and local). This change may be spread out over a few years—not more than five—in order that there may be time to adjust loans, mortgages and other obligations which are based on land as security, but the time must be made short because the industrial and social pressure is great and hasty, thoughtless and disastrous action may result if early relief is not brought into view.

You will advocate this movement to democratize the land if you have Christian instincts, if you are a wise worker, if you are a good citizen, if you are an intelligent business man, if you are a far-sighted politician, if you love man, if you desire justice, if you believe in fair play, if you want to swing wide open the door of opportunity to all men. . . .

Prudent and far-sighted citizens will tell every man in office that they want all site value taxed out of land, they will only vote for national, state, county and local candidates who stand for and will push this principle, they will vote for all constitutional amendments looking toward this end, and they will organize and agitate until land is democratized and democracy really becomes safe for America.

The America of our fathers was a country of free land.

FROM OUR BOOKSHELF

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