

"Mansions in the Sky"—No Tax Yet!

By DOROTHY WORRELL

IT IS interesting to those who know the nub of a problem to watch other thinkers walk around it (the nub), looking at it with unseeing eyes, yet now and then catching a half glimpse of it. It is interesting, because we know the right solution must and will be reached some time, and the thinking of these others indicates trends and paths toward the goal of understanding and solution.



These others know, as we do, that something is wrong in the economics of our living. They do not know what is at the heart of this wrong, but they think about it. Often, too, they skirt the edge of the solution by unthinkingly quoting the obvious, not realizing, of course, that what they see as obvious is a truth applicable generally.

To elucidate, the writer read an article by a woman columnist who is a thinker and who comments aptly on current situations political and economic. In fact, her comments are both pungent and penetrating. She is 93 years old and has written for 50 years or more a column called "Radio Beams" for the Barnstable Patriot, Hyannis, Massachusetts. She is Miss Clara Jane Hallett.

In a recent article on taxes, Miss Hallett made the suggestion,—but let us quote:

"The papers are full of surprises these days—Dorothy Thompson writing about air—as the only thing left to tax. She is way behind the times for once. I thought somebody would get around to that after a while.

"I have been talking about it for years, but of course my Beams have No Killowatts to reach out to the world. I began long years ago when airplanes were just beginning to appear.

"Ever since taxes have been piling up, one on top of another, until the article or object taxed is almost invisible, I have been telling everyone I have met that the only thing left to be taxed seemed to be air, and the time might come when some extravagant administration would be appointing a committee to investigate the subject of air to see if it was possible to make it legal for every man, woman and child in the U. S. A. to have their lungs measured for air capacity, and to tax them accordingly.

"I find we really own very little, almost anything can be taken from us by hook or by crook, fire, flood or taxes. I wondered how much air we are supposed to own, over and around our so-called property, air that we can control, I mean. How high does it go, how much does it

cover? There are smart lawyers who can pick flaws in almost any title, so we have come to believe that the only clear title is to 'Mansions in the Sky,' which we hope is tax free, and our own by reason of our ability of being worthy to possess one of these mansions that seem to be ready for us sometime.

"If a tax was ever put on air would we have to wear a meter on our chest to be read from time to time by a collector? It would cost more to collect such a tax than it was worth; another deficit for Uncle Sam to add to his score. It would be a death blow to the poor, one way or another, extra burden to bear, more sacrifices to

make. It would almost ruin Fresh Air Camps and other healthy outdoor activities. There might even come a time when the population would become a nation of weaklings. Some people would hold their breath by spells and breathe as little air as possible to reduce their tax rate even if it shortened their lives.

"We do not own the air yet. The air is one of the God-given gifts to mankind and everything that breathes. It is entailed and cannot be sold or spent. General Humidity takes his toll from it, but that is his privilege. We also have the right to use it, but that is all, so who could levy a tax?

"A new thought has come to me. A tax on air seemed like a last resort, but now I have found one equally unique—a Mileage tax. A pedometer could be put on our leg and a mileage imposed on pedestrians . . . The pedestrians are wearing out the roads and sidewalks, in particular, tramping to and fro."

The statement to which we would call special attention is, "We do not own the air yet. The air is one of the God-given gifts to mankind and everything that breathes. It is entailed and cannot be sold or spent . . . We . . . have the right to use it, but that is all, so who could levy a tax . . .?"

A little reflection will show that air, never having been privately owned, is clearly a natural resource. *Land* as a natural resource, God-given, and for the use of all alike, would be equally obvious if our use of it were not buried under the burden of monopoly, private taking of ground rent, and a mixing of buildings and land for purposes of taxation and earnings.

The air and the sea could possibly be used as introductions to a demonstration of land as being in the same category. Single land out, shake it free of all its use complications, and perhaps it would be seen in the simple garb of air and water.