

us as nation after nation, as civilization after civilization, have been overwhelmed before." But it will take something of a different scope and character than any mere ephemeral betterment in industrial organization to save us from the deluge.

The Taxation of Land Values is a simple enough remedy; it does not mean pulling down anything, or anybody, to the hurt of the community and its vital interests. It is above all Party consideration and those who understand and believe in the teaching have at their command powerful economic agencies. Every housing scheme, every new road, every new development means an increased demand for land; and the rising value of the land cannot be kept out of sight. The land agent and the auctioneer will see to that part of our propaganda.

To paraphrase the Prime Minister's call to the nation, what is wanted at the United Committee at this time is additional financial support, so to provide for "a 10 per cent increase in directional efficiency," and this we are not without hope of obtaining. The stars in their courses fight against Sisera, and the appeal is to all with judgment and vision.

J. P.

OUR MISSION AND YOURS

The political Parties are passionately calling upon their adherents for additional financial strength and with evident success. In their platform and their Press they have facilities at their command to which we may not aspire. But we, too, must be equipped for our work.

We must insist now more than ever that our emancipating policy shall be considered. Not to do so is to surrender the ground we occupy, ground won for the movement by much sacrifice and years of strenuous endeavour.

The fight for political freedom is over. How to attain economic freedom is now the problem. That is our campaign and we must make it ours.

The need for telling propaganda was never more imperative and the cry for it is insistent. There are continuous demands on the office for explanatory literature. We are urged to replace "without delay" a number of our publications of permanent value that are out of print. Meetings are always in request. Repeatedly we are asked to undertake work that would mean wise and effective expenditure.

Without the means it is impossible to provide these essential services or even to look at the most enticing suggestion.

Our first concern must be "Land & Liberty." Everyone will agree it would be a disaster to the movement if this service was not regularly forthcoming, or had to be curtailed in any way.

The United Committee seeks to impress upon you the urgent need of your special support at this time.

THE FISHERFOLK'S RIDDLE

By W. R. Lester

(Writing from St. Jean de Luz, France.)

This place is very beautiful, and is kept going by the sardine fisheries and the visitors. The fisherfolk are, without exception, the finest in physique I have seen anywhere, but there is trouble among them and the sardine packers. The other night a meeting was held, and was addressed by the Syndicalists from a neighbouring fishing town, where a syndicate or union had been formed lately, and had succeeded in getting a rise in wages from the employers. The object was to form a similar syndicate here. The meeting was well attended both by men and women fisherfolk and packers, though there was no evidence of any interest by hotel visitors, not one of whom troubled to put in an appearance. The Syndicalist missionaries from the nearby town held forth on the advantages of forming a syndicate here, roundly denouncing the employers as men, rather than the system which squeezes them, and assuming all the time that only the ill-will of the employing class stands between them and better conditions. Sufficient pressure had only to be brought to bear to drag out of the masters almost any wage that might be demanded. The class war was frankly preached.

It seems that men's wage is about 1½ francs per hour, and women's about 1¼ francs. At present rate of exchange, this amounts to the miserable pittance of about 5d. to 3½d. per hour. In the town from which the Syndicalists come they had managed to screw wages up to 2 francs and 1½ francs. A woman's grievance is that they are often called on to work in the packing factories all night through without overtime pay. They have to attend at 8 p.m., and if for any reason the boats with their catches do not arrive till later in the night, the women have to wait on without pay. Another trouble which bothers them a lot is that when catches are heavy the sardines sell for next to nothing because of the flooded market. The missionaries told the meeting that in their town the syndicate had very carefully considered this situation, and had concluded that the fishermen must not be allowed to bring into port more than a definite quantity of fish. In this way would the price be kept up and a higher wage paid. That was the remedy of the Syndicalists, and, to judge by the applause it met with, approval was general.

This set one thinking. I have put this matter of the big catches to several hotel visitors. All say there is a kink somewhere, but none can say just where it is. I have ventured to suggest to them that the plan being to restrict supply, it can be of no use to those who want fish, working folk included, but that we must not complain if this idea of restriction is a popular one, seeing that the doctrine of Protection, held in such influential quarters and so widely preached in polite circles, is based on precisely the same superstition, viz., that well-being will grow if we artificially limit the sources from which goods are drawn. I have also suggested that if it is good to restrict the catch, to, say, one ton, it would be better to restrict it to half a ton or even to a single sardine!

The real alternative seems quite clear. The truth is that the large catches of fish cannot be sold simply because buyers are scarce. Buyers are not scarce because everyone has all the fish he needs. On the contrary, great numbers within easy reach of markets are underfed and would gladly buy the fish if they could pay for them. So long as there remains a single underfed person it is ridiculous to talk of an over-supply of fish. What really does exist is under-demand, not over-supply, and this is only one out of many aspects of the problem of poverty. If wages permitted

all the fish caught would be bought, and the questions which trouble the fisher syndicates of this coast would vanish. The plan, therefore, is to increase demand, and this can only be done by such a rise in the wage level as will enable people to buy what they ought to have. Fishermen and others would then laugh out of court the very idea that they must not take the fish which come to their net.

Can it be done? It is often said that France, being a country of peasant proprietors, has no land question. But I find the fact to be that though the land here is very much parcelled out, there none the less exists a large class with no rights in land, and which therefore has to work for wages. This landless class in the part of France where I am, cannot even earn so much as the fishermen, and as theirs is the simplest form of labour, it is their wage level which puts a limit on all others, including the fishermen's and packers'. Though this landless class is here, one also sees all round the towns well placed idle lands displaying the familiar device "Terrains à Vendre." This is the land held by speculators, not to use, but to keep out of use till would-be users come up to their figure. It makes one feel quite at home. This is a lively cause of complaint in the district, and while it goes on depressing the wage of a landless class which competes with the fisherfolk, it seems clear that if the Syndicalists continue on their present lines they may as well shut up shop for all the good they can do. It is the old, old story once more.

For whether the masters be good or bad as individuals, they are bound to take advantage of the cheap labour which throws itself at them. Absolutely the only radical thing is to get rid of this cheap supply at the bottom which pulls down all wages above it. This cheap labour at the bottom would, to a certainty, melt away were the taxing power of the State so applied that no man could hold more land than he is able to make the most productive use of. Were that step taken, all unused land would at once become free land. That is, it would be available to labour and capital without payment either of rent, rates or taxes. Much of this free land would be of high productive capacity, and within easy reach of populous districts. It would provide ample means of livelihood to those whose helpless condition now threatens fishermen's wages. In a perfectly natural way the cheap labour at the bottom would disappear. Nothing could then stop a large rise in fisherfolk's wages, and that without the help of any Syndicalist organization. Our goal would be reached in the natural and, therefore, the only certain way, and where then would be the bother about big catches? Buying capacity being able to absorb them all, our Syndicalists might well cease from worry.

This is the law of life—the way of wisdom. We and the Syndicalists may refuse to follow it, but none of us can escape the consequences, one of which we find in this beautiful Saint Jean de Luz—the absurd irony of abundant food and underfed people. I have merely stated facts as they are.

By FREDK. VERINDER

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From our Offices.

LONDON HOUSING CONDITIONS

What it Means to Live in Slums

"These Ninety Years," the Annual Report of the London City Mission, adopted at the Queen's Hall, 13th May, recites these stories of abject poverty:

A Hoxton worker tells of eighteen persons in a four-roomed cottage. "This was fairly crowded, until the man downstairs sublet a room to his married daughter, who, with her husband and five children, raised the total to twenty-five." From Clapham we learn of *twelve persons in one room*. "The houses here are old and dilapidated: death-traps in some cases, and packed to an unmentionable degree." Stories from Bethnal Green and Shoreditch, of verminous walls, insanitary conditions, of sleeping quarters "knocked up roughly in back yards," make one shudder. "B. and his family of six were herded in a small room. One day their few sticks were shifted into the gutter, as the rats which infest this quarter had got into the room and into the bed! 'Where am I to go?' he pleaded. 'What are we to do?'" Another family of eight live in a one-roomed hovel twelve feet square. "The man and wife and two small children share the bed; the rest manage to 'shake down' on the floor. The other night another child arrived—imagine it (!)." This is even worse: "Here in Holloway the housing problem is not only acute, it is *killing*. Seven and more people in a single room, and in one such room *a birth and a death have been known to occur simultaneously.*"

Speaking at Chester, on 23rd March, Mr. E. Green, formerly Chairman of the city's Housing Committee, said many families in Chester were living and sleeping in one room. There were no means of separating the sexes, and there had been cases where confinements had taken place in the one living and sleeping room. During the war, the churches were recruiting stations. If they played a similar part in rousing the conscience of the nation on the housing question, it would bring the solution of the problem appreciably nearer.

HERBERT QUICK

As we go to press we regret to learn of the death of Herbert Quick, which took place at Columbia, Mo., U.S.A., on 10th May. He was stricken of heart failure after an address to students attending journalism week at the University. Herbert Quick's name is known and revered all round the globe for his able writings on land reform. He is probably best known to our readers by his Single Tax novel, *THE BROKEN LANCE*. He was a voluminous writer on many other topics as well. His latest contribution to the literature on the land question, *THE REAL TROUBLE WITH THE FARMERS*, was reviewed by Alexander Mackendrick in the February issue of *LAND & LIBERTY*. It is work that from first to last strengthens the case for the land value policy as the only genuine and enduring reform, and goes to show that without this practical remedy the farmers are not likely to get into any better environment.

In acknowledging our notice of the book the author wrote to Mr. Mackendrick: "I have to thank you for the best review the book has received."

In Herbert Quick's passing we have to mourn the loss of an able and convincing writer, but we can be glad and grateful for his long years' service in the cause. *THE REAL TROUBLE WITH THE FARMER* marks the place where Herbert Quick fought and fell in the struggle for economic justice.

We extend our sympathy to his widow and to his immediate circle of friends in their great loss.