

HORSES HAUL CHICAGO OUT OF THE MIRE

By Teresa McCarthy

Chicago is notorious for many reasons. Not its least claim to fame is its poorly paid civil servants, nor its dirty and wretchedly maintained streets. Aside from its few, heavily advertised show places, it is an uncouth, squalid, underdeveloped city.

Chicago is a well-robbed city. Popular opinion has it that the politicians are the robbers. But the politicians are merely the puppets of the landed gentry, particularly the offspring of the outlaws who stole the land of the city a century ago.

In 1830 a quarter of an acre of Chicago land could be bought for \$20. Ten years later this plot was worth \$1500. A decade later the established value was \$17,500, and in 1860 it was \$182,000. There was a "panic" in 1894, but in that year of appalling destitution, the same quarter of an acre, according to a report of the Illinois Labor Bureau, reached the gigantic value of \$1,250,000. All due, of course, to constantly growing population and increasing industry, not only of Chicago but also of the great Middle West of which the city is the hub. The owners of the land reaped the benefits of this increasing value—that is, through the ownership of the earth they were able to rob the workers of the products of their labor.

Just as an example: Marshall Field, the best known and one of the greatest of these land-grabbers, was reputed to have an income of from \$500 to \$700 an hour; few of his workers received as much as \$2 a day. When he died he left a fortune of \$140,000,000, principally in real estate, stocks and bonds—that is to say, principally in land values.

Now, through perjury and bribery and law-fixing, the habit—a habit not indigenous to Chicago—of evading the payment of taxes on land values was acquired. The amount of land rent taken by the city of Chicago is ridiculously small. Only a few years ago, when the politicians found themselves without funds to carry on the affairs of the city, and a determined effort was made to collect some land rent,

the landlords went on strike—refused to pay anything until the rates and conditions were made favorable to them.

Chicago takes so little land rent that it is forced to rob labor and capital of their produce to make the city function at all. All kinds of taxes have been devised.

The latest one is a license fee, ranging from \$1000 to \$5000, for permission to "make book" on horse races. That is, a special privilege is to be sold by the city to some people to pursue a profession which has been outlawed since 1887. Mayor Kelly, at whose instance the ordinance was passed, says that he expects the license fees will total \$2,000,000—which the city needs badly.

Puritanical nitwits are aghast at this new way of taxing the public—not because they are averse to the robbery but because it makes the city a party to horse-race gambling. Well, do not whisky taxes put the government into the distillery business, did not income taxes make Uncle Sam a partner of Al Capone?

There are but two sources for public revenue—rent or taxes. Taxes take from labor and capital the things they produce for the satisfaction of human desires. It is of little concern to labor or capital whether the tax collector has clean or dirty hands when he picks their pockets.

And now, the New York State constitutional convention is wrestling with the problem of permitting lotteries, and taxing them.