

## Immigration Barriers Between the States

IT WAS IN CALIFORNIA that Henry George saw the cause of poverty and predicted the social and political effects of that curse on humanity. It was in California that one of these effects was highlighted by a recent decision of the Supreme Court. We refer to the invalidation of the State's anti-migrant law.

This law, sometimes called the "Okie" law even though it has been on the State's books since 1900, made it a misdemeanor to "bring or assist in bringing into the State any indigent person who is not a resident of the State." Its purpose was to keep out migrants who, like the early California pioneers, went West in search of a living.

Since similar statutes were in force in twenty-seven other States, this legislation was not a local accident but rather an indication of a trend of national thought. Part and parcel of our whole protective theory, it stemmed from our land tenure system.

"Okies" are as old as the world. They are merely workers moving from place to place in a seemingly endless search for a better economy. Such was the quest of the Jews fleeing from Egyptian slavery, the early hordes roaming over the plains of Europe, the later European paupers braving the Atlantic and still later the dispossessed workers on the westward trek of covered wagons in America.

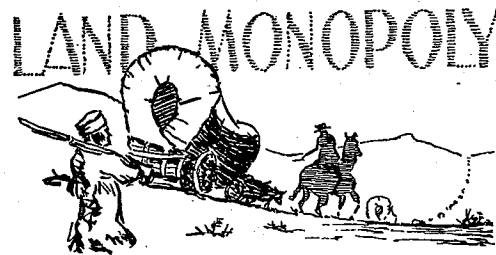
It seems as if humanity has always been on the move. Romanticism has clothed these mass migrations with the spirit of adventure, but analysis indicates that they were motivated by nothing else than a desire to make a better living. A prosperous people stays at home.

But when these migrants got to their respective promised lands they immediately instituted a system which made for the very conditions of poverty from which they fled. They fenced in the land. So that when more workers came in search of employment they found the source of all jobs in the hands of their predecessors or the offspring of those first come. And a price on jobs—monopoly rent—drove the return from labor down to a mere subsistence.

When additional migrants apply for jobs even subsistence is threatened, and with the ferocity of

dogs defending bones, the former migrants, or their offspring, attack the newcomers. In their ignorance of the cause, an ignorance that is perpetuated by law, by tradition and by education, they blame on the niggardliness of nature their own inhumanity.

So they pass laws to restrict immigration between countries and between political divisions within a country. That new workers will produce new wages, that greater production must make for greater national prosperity, that cultural values arise where larger numbers of people engage in exchanges, that civilization is a direct outgrowth of population and develops in proportion to the economic freedom of the population, are for them textbook truths only, because ignorance of causes makes only the obvious intelligible.



And the obvious cries out: There are too many people for the earth to support! Inhuman self-extermination is rationalized, and the rationalization becomes a labyrinth of cannibalistic laws.

Our Supreme Court has invalidated the "Okie" law. But its decision is a gesture that cannot stem the tide of thought. So long as poverty prevails, and the cause is well-hidden from common knowledge by those who profit by it, the belief that the world is over-populated will continue, and the war against the migrant worker will continue.

New legal barriers will be invented, and they will be supplemented with the spontaneous action of communities seeking to protect "standards of living." This blind course will continue until, at long last, men know that the highest standard of living will obtain only when the earth, the source of all jobs, is the common heritage of all, the private property of none.