

A Distribution Factor Worth Investigating

THE highly important task undertaken by the United States Chamber of Commerce, with the cooperation of Secretary Hoover, to conduct a systematic nation-wide investigation of the reasons for the excessively high cost of distributing commodities, will accomplish little more than all its predecessors in the investigation field unless it goes into the fundamentals of the problem. That there are too many persons in the line between the farmer or manufacturer and the ultimate consumer, each of whom takes some toll for his more or less valuable services, has long been well recognized. There has, however been an inclination to avoid discussion of certain underlying facts, either from lack of knowledge as to their relation to the problem, or from an indisposition to criticize what is regarded as the firmly established order of things.

In the course of the forthcoming inquiry, it should be possible fearlessly to examine into all the various items that add to distribution costs, and to recommend the adoption of such changes as would seem equitable and desirable. One of the factors entering into distribution costs is that of rents of warehouses, storage buildings and retail shops. Whether what is termed "economic rent" enters into the price of goods is an academic question that is not of much importance in this connection. What is important is the question of how far the charges of the various "middlemen" are affected by the rentals they must pay for the buildings in which they transact business, and whether it is possible by the wiser direction of taxation to decrease the burden of rent that now is carried.

Visitors to New York City at any time during the past forty years have seen in the heart of the city's business district two blocks, bounded by Thirty-Eighth and Fortieth streets and Seventh Avenue and Broadway, vacant except for some old two-story "taxpayers." These valuable lots have been held out of use awaiting the coming of some owner of capital who would pay the high rental demanded for this fortunately located property. Quite recently the southwest corner of the Thirty-Eighth Street block was leased for an aggregate rental of \$12,000,000 for a term of sixty-three years. This means that in addition to a fair return on the \$3,500,000 which the building to be erected on the lot cost, and heavy city taxes, there must come out of the building's earnings an annual payment of nearly \$200,000 for the privilege to Capital of employing Labor to create a great, useful building. It might be interesting to Secretary Hoover to find out where this \$200,000 comes from each year, and what the lot owner gives in return for it.—*Christian Science Monitor*.

WHEREVER land is used, whether by the owner or renter, and it has a value, there is *actual rent*.

—HENRY GEORGE.

EVEN the captains of industry, who, to the world of a decade or two ago, represented all that was great and noble, no longer are so universally admired and emulated. We have begun, at last, to realize that no special talent, aside from greed, is necessary to make vast sums from cornering natural resources which a growing nation must have; in short, that circumstances, more than outstanding genius, built up most of our great fortunes, and that even today some of our great financiers and industrialists are Babbitts under the skin.

Public Affairs for September

WHEN any radical measure of reform is proposed, the reformer must be prepared to meet, not only the opposition of those whose selfish interests have been disturbed, but the opposition of good people who have been made uncomfortable by his revelation of unwelcome truth.

SAMUEL MCCORD CROTHERS.

BOOK NOTICE

We have received from Mr. Patrick Kelliher, of Chicago, a reprint in pamphlet form of Bishop Nulty's famous Letter on the Land Question to the Clergy and Laity of his Diocese. It is a neatly printed pamphlet of fifty pages, with cover design of Gaelic lettering and tracery.

In a preface Mr. Kelliher says:

"We turn again to the pages of this book; the result is that we are more convinced than before that here is the remedy; that in this book justice is given, and that the provisions of Divine Providence, in wisdom and design for the benefit of mankind, had obviously been guiding the hand that wrote these pages."

It has occurred to us that if this book could be circulated in Ireland it might have the effect of drawing attention to the crying need of reform in the land system of that country. Mr. Kelliher is to be congratulated on a valuable bit of work.—J. D. M.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE BEST SINGLE TAX PAPER

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

I do not know whether I have renewed my subscription or not, but am taking no chances of missing a single copy of the best Single Tax paper published.

Marathon, Iowa.

FLOYD L. WAITE.

FROM A CANADIAN FRIEND

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

I wish I could send a thousand dollars for your Sustention Fund.

Ottawa, Canada.

F. GRIERSON.

CANNOT CONNECT FACTS THAT EXPLAIN OTHERS

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

Enclosed find five dollars for LAND AND FREEDOM. We must not let that go down whatever else does.

Strange how excellent writers in the best magazines betray their innocence of the fundamental law relating to man's use of the land when they write on various problems of our civilization. Sometimes I think they purposely dodge it. However it is more likely that it is an unfortunate instance of man's general disability to think two things at the same time, or to connect two facts that explain each other.

Glendale, Calif.

LONA INGHAM ROBINSON