

Washington Will Not Understand

DR. CHARLES J. LAVERY, of Aberdeen, So. Dakota, wrote a letter to Secretary Wallace and received a reply from the assistant chief which showed that the letter had either not been read or that the Bureau of Agricultural Economics failed to understand it. To this communication Dr. Lavery replied with the following:

Your reply, dated March 1, 1934, to my letter of Feb. 6, 1934, addressed to Secretary Wallace, came to hand, has been read and studied carefully. Kindly permit me to comment thereon. Can it be possible that you read my letter?

Taxation of land values, ALL land values, not "taxation of farm land," was the subject of my letter to Mr. Secretary. I also conceded that railroads should be relieved of ALL taxes, AND the additional expense of their tax departments, in exchange for a substantial reduction in transportation rates. Study of the subject has convinced me to believe that a disinterested survey would demonstrate that a reduction of fifty per cent might be affected if railroads were allowed to concentrate on railroading by being relieved of their duty to the State as tax collectors. Evidently you overlooked that part of my letter concerning the expense of tax departments in railroad overhead.

I said nothing in my letter about "real estate." That trick term is not belong in economics. You should know that, inasmuch as I hold a responsible position in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

As I see it, after a careful study of your letter: You appear to assume that farm lands are the only land values that come within the view of your bureau. You ignore, entirely, city and town lots, coal and mineral lands, church lands, power sites and other land values. You stress the fact that farm taxes now are one and one-half per cent but you ignore the fact that farm tenants pay, when they can pay anything, four per cent to fourteen per cent rental to landlords. I do not appear to appreciate the fact that higher tax on land values, and, little or no tax on consumers goods and services would reduce the price of land, goods and services; nor do you seem to recognize the fact that everybody wants to buy, all they can, of all things.

The writer is a real "Dirt Farmer," owns and operates 550 acres of good farm land. He believes that farmers, both owners and tenants, and labor generally, would be helped more by shifting taxes from land values and services, to land values than by any other form of legislation that has been, or can be devised. Congress alone can perform the much needed adjustment.

A nationwide survey of land values and the ownership thereof would be the most useful piece of research work that any department of government could now engage in for the public good. Land monopoly is the daddy of all monopolies.

Our letter of three pages, single-spaced typewriting is very interesting and illuminating indeed. It goes far in demonstrating the fact that farmers, laborers and consumers generally must depend on themselves and their own efforts, and not on their hired servants in government bureaus and departments, when they attempt to persuade their chosen representatives to remove the burden of taxes from their shoulders, take taxes out of prices, cease obstructing trade.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Senators and Congressmen in this and adjoining states, to Secretary Wallace and Frederic C. Howe of the Department of Agriculture, and to His Excellency, the President of the United States. Kindly supply them with copies of my letter to me of the 1st instant and oblige.

How Imperial Caesars Come

EXTRACT FROM AN ADDRESS OF JAMES H. DILLARD,
DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA,
MAY 29, 1909.

THE cause which seems to me to invite the allegiance of the coming men of America is no less a one than that of the preservation and extension of our democratic form of government. Without danger of being accused of pessimism, we may calmly state that no one can look twenty-five or fifty years ahead and feel positively assured of the permanence and progress of democracy. The fact is that democracy has no patent claim on perpetuity, and if it is to go on increasing the spread of freedom and justice among men, it depends upon the will of such young men as these here today.

I wish to mention an illustration—the typical one—of the recourse to Imperialism. I refer to the last century of the so-called Roman Republic, a period which has frequently been compared with our times. Many thinkers object to such comparisons from history and there can be of course no complete parallel; but there is yet a good deal of truth in the old saying that history repeats itself, and we can get from this illustration an example of two facts which are as true for one age as another. These two facts are, first, that an increasing inequality in the economic conditions of a people—in other words, that the concentration of wealth—is sure to result in political disturbance and disorder. The second fact is that the restoration of order, brought about with the best possible intention, may result in serious loss of liberty, and may undo for centuries the hopes of political progress upon which the welfare of nations and individuals depends.

When we read below the surface, there is no more interesting period in history than the hundred years from 146 to 46 B. C. In the year 146 Rome sacked Corinth and at last utterly destroyed Carthage. She was mistress of the Mediterranean and of all the world that seemed worth owning. By the year 46, the greatest and the best man of his age, the actual leader of the democratic party, working always for what he believed to be the welfare of the masses of the people, had practically destroyed the form of government under which the nation had risen to supreme power and apparent prosperity. The story of this period is one long tragedy. It is a lesson, a sermon written in gigantic characters, telling future generations how not to do things.

The reforms which Caesar carried through were beneficial to the people, and the condition of the masses throughout the Roman Empire was better in the two centuries following Caesar's death than it had been in the last century of the Republic. But what had happened? In order to effect reforms the people had surrendered what there was of a democratic form of government. The gain was at heavy cost.

There may be at least a danger, remote though it may be, of our approaching a condition somewhat similar to that which produced a master in Rome. If we should have a Czar, he would probably come, like Caesar, in the interest of the people, but all his notions of strong government would be weakening our ideas of democracy and the last end would be worse than the first.

THERE is some ground for hope that all fake remedies for the depression will have been tried before the end of the Roosevelt administration. Then it would seem that there will be no longer an alibi available for failure to apply the effective remedy proposed by Henry George. However, the President will still be able to dodge this course by deciding to try the fake measures over again. While this will prolong the depression it will give predatory interests a longer lease of life.