

with the question "What next"? uppermost in the public mind and no one qualified to answer.

It is interesting now to recall the attitude of the organs of public opinion during those troubled days. The press, always ready to uplift the down-trodden, gave fatherly advice. It said that order must be maintained and the law obeyed. These two things were particularly stressed. It said that the employer could not be expected to pay a higher wage than the one agreed upon with the employee, bargaining with him individually, saying nothing about the latter being compelled to take whatever the former choose to offer. It said that contracts must be lived up to, keeping dark about the fact that rising prices might force the weaker party to the contract to violate it if he hoped to live. It said that every citizen in a republic had a right to choose his job and continue at it unmolested, without letting on that the jobs were fewer than the jobbers and the refraining molester might starve. Especially did it caution the strikers not to forfeit the esteem of that potent factor of success, "the sympathy of the public"—that altruistic, tender-hearted public, which in order to increase its ability to help, denies itself every luxury, puts itself on a Spartan diet of bread and water, and lies awake nights, tossing on its pillow, in its yearning for the welfare of the underdog. Then, too, those prime movers in all fundamental economic research—the ministers—took the matter up and pointed out in their illuminating way that capital and labor were partners and ought to live together in harmony—a brand new truth which had escaped general notice. The practice of these self-constituted umpires continues and will continue so long as the blind, according to the proverb, accept the one-eyed as king. If some day, however, with larger knowledge and in an unaccustomed mood of candor, they review their record in the matter, their state of mind will be a trifle qualmish, like that of a healthy palate on tasting an ad-dled egg.

Such in brief, and to date, is the story of organized labor. The subject of that story is no longer clubbed or shot down or jailed—it is not even openly flouted or despised. Circumstances have groomed it into respectability. It takes its seat now at the council table with monopoly, an equal and at peace—each still, however, with watchful eye and its right hand on its hip-pocket.

Of course, from now on there is no hope; chaos is upon us and modern civilization is marching straight down the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire.

There is a curious uncouth animal in Florida—the manatee or sea-cow—which lives on the bottom of the rivers there and feeds upon aquatic plants. A collector, wishing to obtain a specimen, undertook to build a crate around one for transporting it. At first the sluggish creature paid no attention to what was going on, but by and by suspecting, apparently, that something was being done to restrain it of its liberty, it just stretched itself lazily and tore the crate to pieces.

That experiment, in its essentials, bids fair to be repeated shortly but in a wider field and on a grander scale. There are signs that the great American proletarian sea-cow is getting ready to stretch. When it does, the crate which special privilege has been building round it these many years—made up, as it is, of land monopoly, wage-fixing, tariffs, exorbitant freight rates, court injunctions, company stores, black lists and the like—will be shattered beyond repair.

The crate builder is not allowing for the stretch.

—DAVID L. THOMPSON.

## Questions on Taxation

**I**S there not an infinite difference between the value of the products of industry and the value of the land?

Is not the existence of the buildings due to the industry of the builders, while the value of the land is due to the presence of the population and to public improvements?

While the increased assessment of the buildings is an indication of the increase in their abundance, is not the increased assessment of the land an indication of the greater relative scarcity of the land? Where the first settler found a thousand acres available, today we may find a thousand people crowded on to a single acre in the center of the city.

While the buildings diminish in value year after year, and require cleaning and repairing to keep them habitable, and eventually have to be renewed, the value of the land remains generation after generation so long as the population remains. The stock of food must be supplied by labor thrice daily; who ever heard of the renewal of the land value by the owners daily?

While labor must work continuously day by day to maintain the life of humanity on the planet, how much toil must the owner of the valuable land exercise to maintain the enormous rentals that he can collect yearly?

While the value of the land has increased from one dollar per foot to ten thousand dollars per foot in the last one hundred years in the center of this city, where did any man ever hear of a building increasing ten thousand fold in a hundred years?

With the use of the improved printing press, the use of the locomotive, the use of the automatic machinery and other appliances, labor can now accomplish a thousand times as much as our grandfathers could accomplish. In this way the prices of some products have been reduced to a mere fraction of the prices of old times. Does labor receive the benefit of this increased power? While industry has been devising all kinds of contrivances to make goods cheaper and more abundant, the owners of the town sites have been enabled to make the land dearer and dearer. As he can say with every increase in population: "Pay me more, pay me more." Do we not thus place industry under an indebtedness that grows and grows, driving the

two poles of society further and further apart. Does not this make palaces unearned at one end of society and slums unmerited at the other end?

While one end of society is thus getting wealth without work, must not the other end do all the work and lose the wealth. Does not this divide society into oppressors and oppressed, instead of brothers rendering service for service?

So long as we allow people to appropriate that peculiar value, which comes to the land from the presence of society, is not this part able to enjoy all the benefits of society without any of its burdens? Does not this mean that we impose all the taxation on industry, and at the same time compel the industrious classes to support the luxuries of the palace.

In the adjustment of taxation should we not place the burdens on the value of the land so as to remove the possibility of the land being used for extortion, and so that every one will be induced to do his best with his opportunities for the benefit of his fellows. Should we not strive to establish the relation of benefit for benefit, and remove for ever the relation of oppressor and oppressed?

—W. A. DOUGLAS.

## The Rent Question Again to the Fore

THE rent question is again a topic of great interest in Washington. The Rent Commission, which was created during the late World war, when the influx of population caused crowded housing conditions, has been put out of action by the Supreme Court; new aggression by the landlords is again causing trouble; the President of the United States has recommended that some action be taken to curb the *merciless profiteers*; and hearings are being conducted before a joint committee of Congress to determine the cause of increased rentals and to provide a remedy.

The rent question, like every other question which has to be settled, must be analyzed and perfectly understood (diagnosed, as the physician would say) before an effective remedy can be prescribed, and the rent question is one of the oldest questions in the world, for, although mankind was not always conscious of this question, it dates back to the time when man first began building huts to live in. The rent question involves the driving of a bargain in which one man has something to sell which another wishes to buy; but in order that this bargain shall be free and fair there must be freedom of choice, freedom of action, on both sides. Now in the rent question, as it exists today in Washington and everywhere else, this freedom of choice on both sides does not exist. Some men, the landlords (Lords of the land), have something to sell which they may or may not sell, as suits their fancy; but the tenant *must buy*. There is therefore injected into this bargain an element of inequality, so that it is *not free*, and this element of in-

equality is caused by the recognition of private property in land. Now the rent question, involving as it does the question of private property in land, cannot be properly and finally settled until the land ownership question, which injects the element of inequality and monopoly into the rent question, is itself solved. That this question of land ownership is today a question at all is a *marvel of the ages* and a *crowning shame and disgrace* to our civilization, for this question of the ownership of land was settled four thousand years ago by the highest tribunal of which we can possibly conceive, namely, *God himself*, when he gave the law, the only authoritative law there ever can be on this question, to Moses on Mount Sinai, in these words: "*The land shall not be sold forever (in perpetuity) for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.*" (Lev. XXV. 23). Now if we accept this decision of the highest tribunal of which we can ever have any knowledge, and thereby eliminate from the bargain between owner and tenant the element of land ownership, we reach a plane of bargaining on which both owner and tenant are free and equal. The Single Tax is a *name* applied to an *idea*, which is the modern scientific interpretation of the law, or decision, handed down by God to Moses, whereby the element of monopoly is eliminated from land ownership, and the rent question is forever solved. This law is a clear concise statement which draws a line of demarcation between what logically constitutes property and what constitutes nature, between what a man may properly own and what he may not own because God owns it.

In application the Single Tax is childlike in its simplicity for it is placed in full and complete operation by simply exempting from taxation all property (improvements, that which is the work of men's hands), and taking over for public uses the entire value of land due to population. The bargain between owner and tenant then becomes a bargain for the improvements, (house or other buildings and their appurtenances and fixtures), without regard to the land on which these stand, which land is an inalienable inheritance of all the people from God, who owns it because He made it.

Now violation of law and court decisions implies a penalty, even though that law has only human authority; but violation of God's Law incurs a penalty which cannot be evaded, for God's Law is automatic in its action and carries with it its own peculiar and relentless sting. We learn from holy writ that God's chosen people were rebellious and stiff necked, and that they refused to obey His Law; and we are told that because they disobeyed the *land law* (the law of the Sabbaths) they were carried captive to Babylon for seventy years until the law of the Sabbaths was fulfilled, and then scattered over the whole face of the earth. This should have served as a warning of the penalty to all nations and peoples which