

It seems so hard for Mr. Scripps to understand. He says: "The existence of undeveloped lands within the United States today does not relieve our present situation." Of course not. Nor would these undeveloped lands if multiplied a dozen times do anything to relieve it. The fact that they are undeveloped does not help the situation; in reality that is in part the trouble. Nor is this fact cited by Mr. Scripps at all relevant to the situation: "Western states contain millions of acres today purchasable for less than they were twenty years ago." True, doubtless, but what of it? How does that prove that land is no longer "a dominant economic factor"? What is probably asked for these acres is all that they are worth or more, just as twenty years ago the asking price might have been more than they were worth. Many of these acres were subjects of land booms which carried the price asked beyond what they should have been at any time. It is the economic rent that determines the selling price of these acres, and the selling price is based on their earning power. If something has happened to affect the earning power, of course the selling price is less, just as is the case with other millions of acres, rural and urban alike, in the East and West, where the selling prices have mounted higher than they were twenty years ago. So land as an economic factor appears to be very much with us.

VERY difficult it is to be patient and polite. It is Satan who whispers in the ear of St. Anthony in Flaubert's great work: "What after all if the absurd should be true?" But we do not believe it. Correct reasoning from obvious facts still has its value. And we should demand it from those who write for public consumption. We ought to insist on a recognition of cause and effect; we cannot treat fallacy as if it were a pet canary and sings sweetly. Mr. Scripps writes well; he is a newspaper man who knows how to use English. But his reasoning is deplorable. He alleges that the most solid factor in the economic structure, land and its rent, is disappearing, yet he draws large monthly checks for those who produce nothing and from whom he gets nothing but permission to live and print newspapers on the earth—payment for permission to use the economic factor which Mr. Scripps declares is now negligible. It should occur to him that he is paying rather high for a factor that has almost no existence.

Is Saul also among the prophets? President Hoover has seen a light. He looks with disfavor upon those who profit by the increase of land values made by the community. He says so in language that is unmistakable: voices good Henry George doctrine. But hold! It is with reference only to the Indians that he is speaking. He probably still believes that white men should continue to take from other white men the socially created values that attach to land.

BUT at least he is very explicit so far as the Indians are concerned. In his veto of the Choctaw Indian land bill he says: "This case raises a very wide issue whether we are to undertake revision of treaties entered into for acquiring of Indian lands during the last 150 years. The values of such lands have obviously increased, and the undertakings entered into at the time the agreements were made may naturally look small in after years. But the increased values have been the result of the efforts of our citizens in building this nation." This is good doctrine if universally applied. In recent years some of our Indian friends have been enriched by the discovery of oil. Somebody must be after those oil wells!

ARTHUR J. BAILEY, of the People's Church at Olean, N. Y., has a letter in a recent issue of the *Christian Advocate*. It is entitled "Christ's Teaching Applied to Unemployment." He says: "All students of the problem recognize that unemployed labor is largely the result of idle capital." Not *all* students. A few would challenge the contention and are prepared to show that idle labor and idle capital are consequences, not causes. They are therefore able to see that most of the proposed remedies are futile.

AND along with these is Mr. Bailey's own suggestion of a sliding scale of taxation, with the taking over of 50 per cent. of all fortunes of a million dollars or over. He calls this "a safe and sane redistribution of wealth." He reassures the wealthy by telling them that most of the wealth would return to them, though he is rather vague as to the *how* of this. He says, rather naively, that his plan "would work no hardship, as so much wealth is worthless to those who possess it," a statement which to the rich might not be wholly appreciated.

MR. BAILEY is a sincere Christian. He wishes to apply the doctrines of Christ to economics and social conditions. There is only one way: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. It consists in recognizing the God-given right of all men to the use of the earth, and the government's right to the collection of those values which are created by the community. It consists in the recognition of the distinction between those matters which are individual and those which are communal. There is no need of a sliding scale of taxation to take the wealth of the rich, and there is no way of determining by such a method just what proportion of the wealth of the rich belongs to the rich. Without intending it Mr. Bailey is advocating measures that are predatory, not Christlike.

THE question really requires more thought than Mr. Bailey has given to it. For if the wealth of the rich is unearned something is at fault with the methods of dis-

tribution. But if such wealth is earned the community has no right to it. We ask our friend to read "Progress and Poverty." There he will find his question answered. The missing wealth of the poor is not to be put back into the pockets of the poor by any such method as he advocates. The leak may be stopped by a radical but simple change in the methods of distribution.

BUT from another quarter comes at last a real remedy for unemployment and the periodical depressions that visit us. The writer of this new solution tells us it is "very different from socialism." Perhaps it is. It appears that we have a lot of "commonwealth," public parks, roadsides, etc. We are told that "all the spare labor in the country (by which we suppose is meant the unemployed) could be used in improving the roadbeds of the United States." We are urged to take (not actually take in the sense of resumption of ownership but take into consideration) the land on both sides of the railway tracks, so conspicuous as we travel in "our" trains. Do not smile at the word "our." Increasingly large numbers of the unemployed could be absorbed in the improvement of "our commonwealth."

THERE is a certain thoroughness in the suggestion. To make all this really effective we are to have a Peace Time Army, just like a Standing Army. There is to be a General Staff, and these officers of the Peace Time Army and these members of the Regular Army are to receive wages and salaries sufficient to draw the talent that is required. When the Peace Time Army expands to take all those out of employment, the payment of those temporarily employed would be the same as that of the enlisted men in the War Time Army, so as not to take out of private employment those normally engaged in industry. When a corporation like the United States Steel Corporation wants ten thousand men, application will be made to the General Staff of the Peace Time Army, who would immediately dispatch those with the requisite qualification.

THE money for all this would be financed from loans backed by the United States. The loans are to run for twenty-five years. It might be unjust, the author of this plan cautiously says, to tax industry, where so much is being done by business men to relieve distress. But how these loans are to be paid except by taxing industry we are not informed. We are cautioned that the Peace Time Army must be kept free from politics! We seem to sense how easy that would be, like taking the liquor and tariff questions out of politics!

WE have for the most part described this proposal in the words of its very eminent originator. If we were to take it seriously, it has some menacing aspects, since it is a suggestion for the establishment of a new

national slavery for the workers. But of course it is no more practical than a Gilbertian burlesque. Nor is it intended for a contemporary satire like the memorable work of Gilbert and Sullivan. It belongs to the Opera Bouffon of Political Economy, a rapidly growing literature of speculative oddities, weird, mysterious and fantastic. And that the name of the originator may not be lost in this casual periodical literature of his time, here is his name—Richard T. Ely; and the article in which the proposal is outlined in all the stark nakedness of its absurdity is the March number of the *Review of Reviews*.

Justice and Poverty

T. N. CARVER, in *Boston Herald*

WHY not try justice? This formula is used rather frequently when plans for the prevention of poverty are being considered. They who use this formula seem to assume that injustice is the sole cause of poverty. This assumption needs looking into.

We need not waste time discussing the possible connection between injustice and such disasters as drought, flood, fire, accident or sickness. Hardships resulting from disaster are not commonly included under poverty. Poverty generally means the inability to secure, in ordinary times and conditions, the means of supplying one's needs. It is only with poverty in this sense that we are here concerned.

Justice, so far as the distribution of wealth is concerned, generally means that each shall share in the products of industry in proportion to his product, to the value of his product, or to the real value of his work. To pay a man what he needs, merely because he needs it, whether he has earned it or not, is not justice but charity. It is given out of the goodness of the giver's heart and not as a return for what is received.

It is obvious that there are many people who are able to get as much as they need. It is also certain that there are many who do not get as much as they earn or than they produce. But are these two groups identical? If they are, then justice would eliminate poverty. If they are not, it would not help the group which is not getting what it needs to give the other group what it earns.

Another way of presenting the problem is to point out that there are, on the one hand, many who do not get as much as they need, and that, on the other hand, there are others who get vastly more than they earn or than they produce. When these two groups are thus contrasted, it seems to be implied that if the unearned wealth now going to one group were given to those who actually earn, poverty would disappear. But this, again, assumes that those who actually earned that wealth are the identical ones who are now poor, or who are not getting as much as they need. That is an assumption which ought to be verified before we assert too positively that justice will eliminate poverty. Until that is verified, we should