

Land and Freedom

FORMERLY THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

VOL. XXV

MARCH—APRIL, 1925

No. 2

Current Comment

THE General Sales Manager of the Borden Company, A. B. Deute, contributes an article to *Printers' Ink* suggesting that the man seeking employment should ask the employer for references before accepting the position. The idea is not a bad one. Here are a few of the questions Mr. Deute suggests:

"Give me a list of a few of your customers. I want to know how the trade considers you.

"I'd like to have the names of some of your oldest employes. I want to find out if your people feel they are properly paid or if you have a force of men who haven't the nerve to quit and get better jobs.

"Give me the names of a half-dozen or so people who have quit you and gone elsewhere. I want to find out what they think of you now that they have gone.

"Let me have the names of a half-dozen men you have discharged. I want to hear their side of the story. You might treat me the same way some day.

"And also the names of a few old men who are now inactive. Did they have a chance, while with you, to build for their old age?"

To these we might add a few other personal questions similar to those employers are in the habit of addressing to applicants:

Are you married or single?

How many children have you?

What church do you attend?

What is the salary or income, or whatever you call it, that you draw from the profits of your business for your own personal maintenance?

Do you live within your means?

Do you gamble, drink or smoke?

THERE is only one objection to the questions of Mr. Deute and those we add to them, and that is that the man venturing them would not get the job. Such questions are impertinent when addressed to an employer. Mr. Deute's idea of the situation is altogether fanciful. It would be an ideal condition if relations were reciprocal. This doesn't happen to be the case. Employment is a boon to be extended by those in a position to offer the opportunity; relations are one-sided, for there are more men looking for jobs than there are jobs to fill. The employer does not say to the applicant "thank you" when he takes the job; it is the job-hunter who says that. If Capital were solely the associate with Labor in the work of production, and not Labor's boss, references would of course be demanded on both sides. The trouble with Mr. Deute

is that he is dealing with a situation which ought to exist but doesn't. His humor is excellent, but it will seem cruel to the job-hunter.

LET not the Socialist extract comfort from this. The too obvious relation is not the real relation—Capital is not the employer of Labor. Remote as the relation sometimes seems, Land is the real employer of Labor. If everywhere men were to have free access to land they would create what the economists call an "effective demand" for the products and services of labor not directly applied to land. The terms on which Labor can work in the mines and forests and on the farms determine the wages that can be obtained by the workers in the cities, the clerks, bookkeepers, salesmen, managers, et al. When land speculation impoverishes a community, as the "boom" subsides and men are thrown out of work, the effects are directly manifested in lessened demands for the products of factories in which workers are employed, and consequent diminished employment and falling wages for factory workers. And this influence tends to propagate itself through every channel of industry.

WAGES are directly lessened by the difficulty of access to city land, or rents exacted for the use of land beyond the normal rent. If Capital and Labor are pressed too far by landlord exactions, production halts, and in some cases ceases altogether. Every worker is directly affected by this economic factor of rent forever tending to extend itself beyond the normal rent line. On this all wages depend, for however complex the relation may seem, the primary relation is the persistent one—Land and Labor as the only two factors, with Capital, the offspring of this union, given a factitious importance by a topsy-turvy economic system and the false teachings of current political economy.

RENT is a beneficent, an indestructible provision arising from degrees of productiveness of different locations. Even in the case of farm land it arises not directly from the fertility of the soil, but from the advantages given by population, centers of trade or travel, or railroad communication. It points, as Single Taxers contend, to the real source of public revenues that if drawn on to the exclusion of other forms of taxation would leave industry undisturbed and unhampered by the exactions of the taxgatherer. Besides, the taking of this economic rent for public purposes acts as a regulator of rent, in a

sense, preventing its extension beyond the danger line. In other words, it prevents the rise of speculative rents. Where light taxes are imposed on economic rent, land is held out of use in anticipation of future increase in value, and to that extent productiveness is curtailed and the return to Capital and Labor lessened. This is the lion in the pathway of industry; to this is due disturbances in business and the panics and industrial depressions that occur from time to time. Contributory causes undoubtedly exist to which a primary importance is too often assigned, but the really primary cause is that we have indicated. Land is the natural element on which Labor must be exerted in order that wealth—the things which minister to human needs and human desires—may come into being. A system that leaves land to be regulated by those into whose hands the monopoly of the earth has fallen, must operate to destroy the beneficent operation of the law of economic rent and the best use of natural resources by all the people. And on the best use of these natural resources depends the return to Labor and Capital and indeed the actual ability of the worker to sustain life.

HERE is the peroration of a speech awarded a prize by a Los Angeles Real Estate magazine. The genius responsible for it should be named in order that he be not wholly lost to posterity. It is William Akin. Let the name be blazoned everywhere, for such talent should not go unrecognized.

"But time moves on, and each succeeding age sees greater marvels wrought—Dominion over land and sea of this enduring Race—Supreme Historic Prophecy—is now in final consummation. A city of surpassing grandeur rises in the new born West—Where?

Where lanes converge, and trade is served by the immutable laws of time and space.

Where Industry's basic needs in volume and diversity permit unlimited expansion.

Where East meets West and nature's softest moods make work a pleasure—mere living joy sublime.

Where land meets sea on calm Pacific shores.

THERE IS LOS ANGELES, Metropolitan Masterpiece of the unfolding Age, Commercial Arbiter of the East and West. Crown Jewel in Earth's diadem. Humanity's ultimate triumph."

LOS ANGELES, the Mecca of land speculators, where as the boom subsides, will come all the poverty, misery and wretchedness that follow in its wake! To add to the general chorus, Mr. Arthur Brisbane, Mr. Hearst's hired man, shouts the following from the house tops. He is not as flamboyant as Mr. Akin, for he has a more restrained pen that he knows how to use from long practice. That pen is at the service of his master as long as the dollars pour into him. We quote Mr. Brisbane:

"Is there a lull in the Los Angeles boom? Yes; a lull like that of a man catching his breath after a marathon race.

William Randolph Hearst was born in this State, and rode around here on horseback with his father, Senator George Hearst, when a little "loose change" would have bought a million dollars' worth of today's real estate.

Mr. Hearst has had his lesson in California land values, and he is buying now, doing his Los Angeles shopping early. With the beginning of the year the rush to buy will start again. The so-called "lull" is confined to subdivisions that are being laid out as part of the general plan for a city of six millions."

MR. BRISBANE knows his economics. He knows that this little "loose change" invested many years ago would have bought a few thousand Los Angeles workmen, clerks, salesmen, shopkeepers, typewriters, sewing women, and servants, they and their descendants. This is the modern slavery which is hidden from the undiscerning. If it is not destroyed it must destroy what we have of civilization. The real enemies of that civilization are not the Bolsheviks, radicals or I. W. W., but all those who are helping to perpetuate and defend this slavery. Those who know yet defend it must stand high on the roll of infamy, and among them the name of Arthur Brisbane is conspicuous.

THE landlords' land was everywhere shaken on Saturday evening, Feb. 28, at 9 P. M. No rents were made by the earthquake, and the other kind of rents will go on as usual. The disturbance was due to what the seismologists call a "fault" in the earth's strata; the land owned by 2 per cent, of the population of Manhattan Island down as far as the geologists drop their figurative plummets is still here, and so the Astors, Goets, Rhinelanders are still secure in the enjoyment of their graft. Did you ever think of the absurdity involved in the idea of owning things like that—"faults," geological formations, layers of stratified earth, down to the more or less solid rock on which Manhattan is built? What is owned is really not the land; the title deeds are not ownership in fee simple to parts of the planet, but in reality ownership in people and the products of their labor. Let us not forget that. Titles to land are liens on the products of labor, paid annually in "goods," as we call them—all good things. Not ownership of the planet, absurd as that is, but ownership of people, of workers and their work. That is landlordism.

Dr. S. Parkes Cadman

THERE is no individual in the public eye who is more typical of the spirit of the times than Rev. Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, of Brooklyn, whose radio talks every Sunday afternoon are the delight of the unreflecting. A clergyman, his thought is materialistic; a student, his philosophy is surprisingly superficial; a liberal, his outlook is reactionary.

His "rapid fire" answers to questions (carefully rehearsed in advance) are the merest skimming of the surface of