

Land and Freedom

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Current Comment

SOMETHING is bothering George W. Hinman, of the *New York American*. Mr. Hinman is bothered a great deal these days. His special trouble at this time is why there are attacks on John D. Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Company and only words of praise for Henry Ford, who has long out-distanced the former in the race for wealth. He put the problem up to a "radical" friend whose answer was that Mr. Ford had blessed the "masses" by giving them cheap automobiles. He had given them the pleasure of motoring in his ten million cars. Another, a writer on "industrial democracy," is quoted as saying: "If real wealth were being turned out by industrial enterprises at the rate at which it comes from the Ford factories, and were being shared by labor in the same proportion the demand for control (of business) by the workers would still be a long way off."

MR. HINMAN thinks these answers unsatisfactory and indeed they are. But if Mr. Hinman will read Henry D. Lloyd's "Wealth against Commonwealth," or Ida Tarbell's "History of the Standard Oil Company," he will learn why Henry Ford is popular and the Standard Oil magnates unpopular. Henry Ford has not sought for legislative favors; he has never endeavored brutally to crush out competition; his industry owes nothing, or but very little, and that little indirectly, to the tariff. That is the answer. Even if incapable of formulating their reasons for liking Mr. Ford and disliking rich men like Mr. Rockefeller, people have a sub-conscious apprehension of the reason for their prejudice for one and their partiality for the other. Without real economic knowledge, they prefer a man whose riches are not the result of legislative co-partnership, and cannot be traced directly to laws favoring monopoly. Ford entered manfully into the industrial struggle, with a business that stands squarely on its own bottom, never seeking for favors nor secretly conspiring with lawmakers. This, Mr. Hinman, is the reason why people like Henry Ford.

THAT economic maladjustments have contributed to swell the profits of the Ford plants is probably true. It may be true that, owing to the fact that labor is divorced from natural opportunities, Mr. Ford's wealth contains a large element of unconscious exploitation. But this is true of all great industrial plants. Mr. Ford has at least played the game fairly. He has asked for no advantages

which are not equally shared by his competitors. We confess to sharing the public sentiment in favor of a man who does that.

OF course, our economic system is such that it provides open invitation to seekers after opportunities for legislative advantages and economic exploitation. To succeed one must often avail himself of these. Not to take advantage of them is often to be crowded to the wall. Great fortunes, with few exceptions, are to be traced to land monopoly, tariff or railroad privilege; to the powers given to large capital; to a situation where the production of wealth may be restricted; to the powers of exploitation in a situation where Labor must work for an employer or starve—to that slavery, in short, where the workers are economically dependent on the owners of natural opportunities, or on capitalists who must themselves bargain with the holders of such opportunities.

OUR congratulations to Mayor Webb, of Winnipeg. There is a "mall" to be built in that city—a broad highway extending from Portage Avenue to the Parliament Buildings. Mayor Webb sees that public improvements make land values and that such values should be taken to pay for these improvements. When mayors of cities begin to see these things, the more careless citizens will see them, too, and the whole question will be in a fair way of being solved.

AFTER all, what can be simpler? The theory of "benefits received" and "ability to pay" theory, which have divided the thousands who have speculated on the subject of taxation, are co-related. Here they can be made to co-relate, at all events. It is bad policy in a government to tax people merely because they have the money and the government can get it out of them. Dick Turpin did that, and governments are not supposed to be run in accordance with the ethics of Dick's profession. But unfortunately they are. The whole theory of the Income Tax, for example, and the surtax on incomes, are based on the theory of going after the money where it can be got. There are no ethics or decency about it. Our apologies to Dick Turpin, however, for we have historic evidence in support of the fact that he did not rob the poor, but confined his depredations to the rich. This was not highly ethical, of course, but it shows out in sharp contrast to the practice of governments that go after the rich in the manner of Dick Turpin, but discard Turpin's sentimental consideration for