

# Land and Freedom

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## Current Comment

MR. "ZERO"—otherwise Mr. Urban L. Ledoux—has been in this city for some weeks seeking shelter for the homeless in church edifices. His attempts have not been very successful. Perhaps the novelty of the suggestion has stood in the way. Most people are startled at any proposition to apply the teachings of Jesus. Jesus had very democratic ideas regarding the poor. He felt with instinctive knowledge that poverty was institutional. He even declared that he came to break the bonds of those that were enslaved; he cited the ease with which the fowls of the air made a "living." We know that the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. Ever since his time men able and willing to work have sought vainly for crust and a shelter.

IT is not recorded that Jesus anywhere sought to justify the neglect of the poor by easy reference to the few who do not want to work, with which so many modern wise men brush aside the cry of the needy. We can not gather from His words that he believed the "crime of poverty" due to individual delinquency. Otherwise he would not have shown such a liking for the society of the poor. He would have dealt with them according to their delinquency. It is a matter of record that he did not.

THE churches have improved on the teachings of Jesus by beating them pretty thin. Christianity has erected magnificent cathedrals and massive edifices, and all have iron railings and locks and padlocks. The pews are private for the most part, and sermons evade the practical application of the texts. Religion is too often, not something for daily use, but appeals to a rather remote religious experience and consciousness. The sermons partake of the conventionalities of the time, as, for the most part, they have done in all history. At times the silence is broken by a Savonarola, a Beecher, or a Theodore Parker. But we are asking too much if we demand that ministers of the Gospel speak and act independently of their environment. It is a bread-and-butter question after all.

MR. LEDOUX forgets this. Partly he forgets it because he is not well informed on his economics. He thinks the question is to be solved by getting a few jobs for the unemployed. Matters would not be much improved, might indeed be made worse, if all the churches opened their doors at night to the unsheltered. The pity

is that quests such as Mr. "Zero" has entered upon, with all the devotion of a fine nature and intense sympathy for the distressed, serve to divert attention from the real problem, which is "What is the cause of unemployment?" If it is institutional, inherent in a defective form of society, a product of economic maladjustment, as examination will reveal it to be, then Mr. Ledoux's mission is not only futile, but worse than futile. For it is an expenditure of energy that can accomplish nothing permanent.

THE sympathy to which he appeals, however, is not to be despised. For it is not enough to *know*; it is necessary also to *feel*. Luke North put it aptly when he said that the only difference was between those who *cared* and those who did not. There are many who know but do not care; "Mr. Zero" cares and does not know. It is first necessary to know and then to care; knowledge must direct the sympathy that is expended; otherwise the sympathy is wasted. If one has the knowledge yet does not care he is as useless in the present crisis as those whom Luke North sought to stigmatize. If the Single Tax movement could borrow even a modicum of Mr. Ledoux's fine crusading spirit it would cause something of a stir in the world.

GEORGE W. HINMAN is a writer on the *New York American*. In the issue of that paper for Jan. 9 he discusses the question of unemployment. As this writer's view-point is that of many modern teachers of economics we quote:

"A man and a woman cannot occupy the same job. If the women can do the work and will do it, the men must go elsewhere for work. If there is nowhere else to go, he joins the rank of the unemployed. In England, apparently, he often has to do this. In the United States, where employment is more plentiful, where in good times there is work enough for all, he often has only to change his job or his occupation."

And again:

"Only one thing is sure. It is, that when the times are poor more men are unemployed if many women work; that only in this country is there at any time work enough for all workers of both sexes, and that in an old and settled country like England women's employment means a certain amount of men's unemployment year in and year out."

And finally:

"In general, there would not be so many men sitting on park benches if there were not so many women employed in what were once men's places."