

It is sometimes urged that drink is the cause of crime, but while some crimes may be traced to this cause it is obviously not logical to infer that because most criminals drink that such indulgence makes them criminals. Eighty per cent. of the male population of New York State drink. Less than one per cent of this number are criminals. It seems absolutely certain that serious crimes have but little or no relation to the use of alcohol—such crimes as murder, burglary, arson, grand larceny, forgery, bigamy, etc.

A writer in the *Forum* for August, 1916, thus sums up the argument: "In recent years the concensus of opinion among criminologists is that the chief cause of crime is not drink but poverty."

In a pamphlet printed by the Publicity Bureau of the Joseph Fels Fund of America and entitled *Institutional Causes of Crime*, the author, Louis F. Post, now Assistant Secretary of Labor, says:

"In the monopoly of the planet therefore, we may find the underlying and all inclusive institutional cause of crime.

Not that there are no other institutional causes. There may be many. Not that there are no hereditary, educational, or other personal causes. There are many. But in a generalization of causes, this one either comprehends most of the others, or would do duty for them all if the other social causes were abolished and all the personal causes were cured."

COST OF LIVING

The most notable advance in prices (as pointed out by Prof. Scott Nearing) has been in minerals (tin, lead and zinc) and in timber and farm products. Prof. Nearing shows that the rise in prices in the last few years is much greater with commodities directly dependent on land for their production.

The Professor then turns his attention to what he calls a "striking circumstance" and seeks the cause. He finds it impossible to determine whether mineral lands have risen greatly in price, since figures for such increase are lacking. As to timber lands he finds from the Federal Bureau of Corporations that "the increase has been nothing less than enormous." The values of timber lands in the great lumber regions have increased from 300 to 1,000 per cent. in ten years. Wheat and flour, eggs and butter, meat and cheese have led the procession of a rise in prices. In this case, too, Prof. Nearing finds a corresponding increase in land values.

Farm lands in this period (1900 to 1910) have increased 108 per cent, the middle Atlantic states 19 per cent, the mountain states 13 per cent. This increase is, by some, accounted for by reason of the increased cost of farming, and sometimes attributed to the increased productivity of the land, but Professor Nearing says that an appeal to the facts shows that the value of Western land has increased out of all proportion to the increased productivity.

The relation of high cost of living to high land values is a close one, though it may not be always easy to trace it. But speculative rent is a tax on production. By encouraging the holding of land out of use, production is lowered relatively to effective demand for commodities, and this scarcity is reflected in high prices.