

that the migratory workers are unfitted to take care of themselves, incapable of even participating in the attempts at a solution of the problems confronting them, then the Commission ought not to hesitate to announce its opinion of these men. In the latter case it would seem to me entirely fitting that the Commission should not only rely upon existing statutes but recommend more laws, rules and regulations to govern the workers' everyday life, more municipal lodging houses, larger county institutions for the poor, increased public charities of various kinds, free or nearly free public employment bureaus, and other means whereby the workers may be persuaded that the practice of self-help and the rendering of mutual aid among their own class, is an unnecessary virtue.

Would it not be much better to consider these workers as men who have duties to perform to themselves and to their fellows, rather than to view them as a species of wards who, together with their jobs, must accept endless "nursing" from the State and charity from the public or private institutions?

There is an important detail of the Wheatland case which has not been adequately dealt with in the report. The fact seems to be clearly established that a little advertising brought a surplus of workers to Wheatland—in the month of August. This incident is important in view of the threatened influx of labor following the opening of the Panama Canal. If casual and migratory laborers in California were in "pressing need" during the month of August before the opening of the Canal—what is going to be the situation when the surplus labor of the Mediterranean countries begins to swarm to the Pacific Coast?

Surely it will not be disputed that this increase of immigration will further complicate the solution of the problem under discussion. Why not be frank, and admit that California is already well supplied with common, casual or migratory labor?

It may be readily admitted that California can support many times her present population but it is plain that something must be done to enable the men with small means to "get on the land." And in order to do this effectively something must be done to deal with those who "hold large areas of land for purely speculative purposes."

To me it appears that the problem of the migratory and seasonal workers is inseparably linked with the fact of idle land. I therefore take this opportunity to call attention to Assembly Constitutional Amendment No. 7, now pending before the people of California. This measure, if adopted at the November election, will help immeasurably to put to use the idle land of the State. When we shall have done this—when we shall have attacked land monopoly—we will have attacked at its source the evil which has created the problem, not only of our migratory and seasonal workers, but of all other classes of labor.

[See current volume, page 229.]



#### Houston's Council Warned to Enforce Law.

A member of Houston's Tax Payers' Association, one H. F. Cohen, has notified the Mayor and Council of his intention to appeal to the courts to compel enforcement of the tax laws so far as they re-

late to taxation of improvements on land. On June 3 Mr. H. F. Ring supplemented the threat of Mr. Cohen, by declaring his intention in a letter to Council, to intervene and join in Cohen's suit, but to go further and to demand strict enforcement of all tax laws. Mr. Ring pointed out in his letter the delinquencies of Council as follows:

On the 1st day of January last there was on deposit in various banks and trust companies in the city of Houston the sum in round numbers of \$40,000,000, at least \$30,000,000 of same being then and there owned by citizens of Houston. That in line with the provisions of article 7521 revised statutes of Texas, the city can compel every bank and trust company in Houston to furnish its assessor and collector with the names of all citizens having money on deposit and the amount of said deposits respectively, on the first preceding day of January of every year, and can thus ascertain with absolute certainty and tax accordingly, with uniform impartiality, the full amount of cash in bank owned on that day by every citizen within the corporate limits. That notwithstanding the statute above referred to and the ease with which \$30,000,000 or more of taxable values could have been and can still be added to the assessment rolls of the city, your Honorable Body has so far wholly failed and neglected to place thereon one single dollar's worth of the tens of millions of cash on hand owned by citizens of Houston on the 1st day of January last, contrary to the constitution and laws of Texas and greatly to the direct pecuniary loss and damage of protestant.

That as shown by statements duly published, the banks and trust companies of this city had on loan to individuals and corporations on said 1st day of January last not exceeding \$30,000,000, at least \$10,000,000 of which, according to article 7505 of said revised statutes, is subject to State, County and Municipal taxation. And protestant further represents that the mortgage records of Harris County disclose the fact that on the same date over \$15,000,000 was being loaned by individuals residing in Houston. That not one dollar's worth of this vast amount of wealth appears on said assessment rolls and that hence there should also be added to same at once \$30,000,000 of credit values, since the law requires all property, including "credits" to be rendered for taxation at its full value. . . .

This protestant asserts that the silly contention that to tax cash on hand with impartiality would cause the withdrawal of bank deposits, the forced calling in of loans, the derangement of business and the destruction of business men, is unworthy of serious consideration. Few people so fortunate as to have money in bank on the first day of January of any year would object to the giving of 1 or 2 per cent of it for the support of the city government. And equally absurd are the vaporings of singletax cranks to the effect that a systematic effort to tax credits—money loans—amounts to double taxation, since the land given as security is also taxed as well as the money loaned on it, and that the whole burden of such taxation in the long run falls upon the borrower in increased rates of interest. That, of course is absurd. And the same is true also as to the most brazen claim of all made by these pestiferous mal-

contents, that a tax on any kind of property produced by human industry increases its cost, and in the long run is passed on to the user or the consumer in the increased price of the thing used or consumed, no matter how poor the user or consumer may be. While to assert that an earnest attempt to enforce the collection of taxes on credits and personal property would make liars and perjurers of 99 out of every 100 of our citizens if compelled, as the law requires, to swear to their assessment rolls, is equally preposterous. No gentleman, especially if a member of the Tax Kickers' Association, would ever stoop to such a thing as lying when it came to listing for taxation all his personal property and "credits" at the full market value of same. He would do it cheerfully, of course, because he wants your Honorable Body to insist on obedience to every provision of the law relating to taxation. . . .

In regard to merchants and manufacturers Mr. Ring says:

The same were systematically assessed at even less than 25c on the dollar and at least \$30,000,000 should be added to said rolls on account of such wilful and unlawful under-valuation made with the wicked connivance of your Honorable Body. That the fact that it is greatly to the interest of the city of Houston to encourage the coming here of manufactories and wholesale and retail merchants by assessing as low as possible the wealth used by them in employing labor and making the city great and prosperous and thereby adding enormous values to vacant lots and lands often owned by individuals who do nothing with their idle holdings except to extort all the purchase money possible from those who would improve and make them useful to mankind, is no excuse for such an unlawful discrimination in the assessed valuation of property produced by human labor as compared with the assessed valuation of property which is the gift of nature. This is the case even though such discrimination may be for the true interest of land owners generally, including even dogs in the manger, who will neither sell nor improve, but whose holdings are greatly enhanced in value by the growth and prosperity of the city.

Protestant also avers that not a cow or horse, gun or watch, or a single article of household furniture, jewelry, book, silverware or wearing apparel appears on said assessment rolls, notwithstanding the fact that a house to house visitation by properly authorized city officials, at a comparatively trifling expense, would disclose the fact that in the 20,000 or more homes of this city there are at least \$10,000,000 worth of property of this character subject to taxation, according to the constitution and laws of the state of Texas, and the ordinances of the city, and that over 10,000 men and women owning small amounts of personal property subject to taxation as aforesaid, are now, in violation of law, enjoying the benefits of our glorious government without directly contributing one cent to its support. And this, notwithstanding the fact that the law permits the seizure for taxes of property otherwise exempt from execution. . . .

The partial exemption of improvements from taxation results in reducing taxes on the great majority of small homesteads, since the improvement values of these homesteads largely exceed the land values,

thus making it easier for poor people to acquire homes and hold on to them. . . . And this protestant avers that any system of taxation which thus favors the poorer classes, to the pecuniary loss of a few individuals of the richer classes, is gross discrimination and class legislation of the worst kind and should never be tolerated. Tax discriminations favoring the rich are bad enough, but those which favor the poor are intolerable.

Since the plan of partial exemption of improvements from taxation was adopted by Houston three years ago, the greatest hotel building in the South has been erected here, and also during this period the largest number of tall office buildings of any city in the Union, in proportion to its population, have been erected in Houston. That to continue this plan of taxing improvements low and land values high, will, as stated in the protesting resolutions presented a few weeks ago to your honorable body by the Tax Kickers' Association, so stimulate the erection of additional office buildings, that too many of them will soon be built and office rent will thereby be so reduced by competition for tenants, that the present investments in these buildings will no longer be exceedingly profitable to the owners of same, thereby working great injustice to the enterprising citizens by whom these magnificent ornaments to our city have been erected.

The protestant further represents that said partial exemption from taxation of improvements has also stimulated the building of apartment houses and dwelling houses in such numbers that already too many of them have been built, and that to continue the policy longer will produce many vacant dwellings, resulting in great reduction in rents and cause landlords generally, including many poor widows, to go to great expense in remodeling dwelling houses and adding modern conveniences and comforts to same, without enabling them to demand increased rent commensurate with the cost of such improvements; it being evident that to exempt or lessen taxation on improvements does not in the long run benefit the owner of rented improvements, but the benefit is wholly reaped by renters in reduced rents. This was also ably shown and complained of in said resolutions of the Tax Kickers' Association.

This protestant further represents that he is engaged, though as a side line, in the vacant lot industry, but that many of his most worthy fellow citizens, including probably his fellow protestant, the complaining Cohen, have no other occupation or means of becoming wealthy. . . . Other cities in Texas are adopting and threatening to adopt the Houston plan of taxation. And that when this plan becomes general it is probable that it will ultimately render it more difficult for those engaged in said vacant lot industry to appropriate for their own use and benefit all the unearned increase in land values, as has been the case in the past. This is likely to prevent your protestant and the few hundred owners of large tracts of vacant land and valuable unimproved lots in the city from making as much profit from increase in land values as would otherwise be the case. . . .

The fact that the man responsible for the Houston plan of taxation was re-elected to his office by an overwhelming vote at the last city election and that

99 per cent of the citizens of the city have expressed their approval of his plan by cheerfully signing the assessment rolls as prepared by him, should not deter your Honorable Body from a literal enforcement of the law by assessing at its full value personal property and credits of every description. Your oath of office compels you to do this, regardless of how it may effect the prosperity of the city and of what wreck and ruin may result from complying with the request of the public spirited patriots composing the Houston Tax Kickers' Association.

[See current volume, page 414.]



#### French Cabinet Crisis.

Following the final election returns, which left the Doumergue minority a slender working majority in the Chamber of Deputies, the Cabinet resigned on the 3d. President Poincare called upon a number of political leaders successively to form a new Cabinet. Among those who have declined, or who have failed in the attempt to form a new ministry, are Jean Dupuy, a former premier, Rene Viviani, Paul L. Peytral, and Theophile Delcasse. The venerable Senator Felix Ribot, who ran against Poincare for the presidency, is the latest to attempt the formation of a Cabinet. This uncertainty as to the dominant political force involves the two and three-year military service, and indirectly influences the international relations between France and Russia, and France and Germany. The radicals, under Caillaux, and the Socialists under the leadership of Jaures, constituting the largest working force in the new Chamber of Deputies, are inclined toward the Kaiser, rather than toward the Czar. [See current volume; page 538.]



#### English Affairs.

Ulstermen have decided, according to report, to make no move against Irish Home Rule until the bill becomes law. Meantime they continue their military preparations. Another gun-running feat, by which 3,000 Mauser rifles were landed in Ulster, was accomplished by an Irish yachtsman. [See current volume, page 513.]



The Parliamentary recess has been marked by an apparent growth in Liberal sentiment, and by opposition to a general election this year. Chancellor Lloyd George's definite pledge to continue this Parliament until plural-voting has been abolished, has renewed the fighting spirit of the Commons. [See current volume, page 537.]



Sir William Lever, one of the English millionaires subject to the super-tax of the Lloyd George Budget, estimates that a man with an income from \$5,000,000 would pay one-third of it to the gov-

ernment. "I like it," he said. "In my view the ideal system of taxation, both local and imperial is through the income tax, the supertax, death duties, land tax, site value tax, and taxation upon luxuries, such as alcohol, tobacco, etc. Everything else free."



Three of the largest trade unions in the country, the miners, the railway men, and the transport workers have decided to form a huge labor combination for self protection. This will unite 1,350,000 well organized workers. Among the articles of agreement it is provided that when one body goes out on strike the others will support it. All wage demands will be presented simultaneously.

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## NEWS NOTES

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—The Federal Court at Trenton, N. J., ordered on June 2 the dissolution of the American Thread Agency known as the Thread Trust.

—The Court of Appeals of New York State on June 2 upheld the validity of the impeachment proceedings of Governor Sulzer. [See current volume, page 207.]

—The Florida direct primary on June 2 resulted in the nomination of Senator Fletcher for re-election on the Democratic ticket. He had about 3,000 majority over his opponent, John N. C. Stockton.

—Militarism is provoking a spirited protest from Austro-Hungarian taxpayers. The minister of war asks for \$186,000,000. The army needs \$115,000,000, the navy \$36,000,000, and the militia \$35,000,000. Seven years ago the total was \$96,000,000.

—William Marconi, on the 8th, talked over his wireless telephone between London and Berlin, a distance of 600 miles. "I could not hear all the words," he said, "but the test was most promising, considering the distance. [See current volume, page 494.]

—The insurgent force threatening Durazzo, the Albanian capital, was defeated by government troops on the 8th. George Fred Williams, the American Minister to Greece, left Athens on the 8th for Albania to offer his services as a disinterested mediator. [See current volume, page 517.]

—To test the electric towing locomotives at the Gatun Locks, the Panama Railroad steamship Alliance, a vessel of 4,000 tons, was passed through the locks on the 8th. There were no delays or accidents, and the time required each way was about one hour and a half. [See current volume, page 442.]

—All passengers refusing to pay more than a three-cent street carfare in Toledo are still being carried free. A threat by the company on June 2 to eject all such passengers was rescinded on the following day. About 20 per cent of the riders are estimated to be of this class. [See current volume, page 348.]

—Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton, English poet, novelist, and critic, died on the 7th. Mr. Watts-