

Wealth that is Not Wealth.

In the organ of a Southern railway enterprise we find this quotation from the Wall Street Journal, accepted and approved by the railway organ: "Much of the increase of the South's wealth, when the next census is taken, will be found to consist in the rise in the value of lands." This "rise in the value of lands" is accounted as wealth, by the Wall Street Journal, by the railway organ, and—of all things nonsensical—by the census bureau of the government. But it is wealth only as the value of a private taxing power would be wealth. If the legislatures of the Southern States were to give to Peter Pan, his heirs and assigns, the lawful right and legal power to levy a tax of one cent per capita on the inhabitants of those States forever, the wealth of Peter Pan, his heirs and assigns, would indeed be very great. But the wealth of everybody else in those States would be that much less. Precisely so is it with land values as items of wealth. They are wealth to the owners of the lands, but they add nothing to the aggregate of wealth, for every dollar's worth of wealth that is paid to land-owners as such is a dollar's worth of wealth deducted from industry. If the land values of the South have risen, it means that workers must stand higher exactions, relatively to their production, for permission to use Southern lands.

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A striking confirmation of the above view is found in a decision of the Supreme Court of Maine made last March. We quote it for the benefit of thinkers who are not sure of their thinking unless they find it approved by respectable authority. The Maine court made the decision in reply to a request from the State Senate for an advisory opinion upon the right of the legislature to regulate or restrict the use of uncultivated lands in the public interest without the consent of or compensation to the owner. In the course of an elaborate opinion in support of that right, the Chief Justice and five associate justices observed that "property in land is not the result of productive labor, but is derived solely from the State itself." If this property is not the result of productive labor, but is derived solely from the State itself, its value must be tribute derived from productive labor and therefore a deduction from and not an addition to the general wealth. Higher values of land may indeed be indicative of augmented wealth. Just as the higher value of a private per capita taxing power, would indicate an increase of population, so the higher value of land indicates an actual or prospective increase of

wealth production; but it is the wealth produced and not the value of the tribute levying power that belongs in the category of the general wealth.

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City Charters.

The makers of the Galveston plan of city government and the distinguished men who applauded it, builded better than they knew. It is only half a plan, but it has suggested the other half, and that other half has been supplied by Des Moines (p. 57). The Galveston plan provides for efficiency, but it removes the government of the city from the control of its citizens. While the plan provides for efficiency it is the efficiency of irresponsible power. The governing commission once chosen is absolute during its term of office. The Des Moines plan, however, provides for democratic efficiency. The commission is chosen in a democratic way, and while it is as absolute in its powers, and therefore as efficient, as is the Galveston commission, it is continuously subject to popular instructions by the initiative, to popular veto by the referendum, and to immediate popular condemnation by the recall. The Des Moines commission is absolute, and each member is responsible for his own department, until the people themselves interfere by formal action, and then it is they that are responsible. Almost a year has elapsed since Des Moines and Cedar Rapids went under this system. There has been no movement for initiative or referendum or recall in any obstructive way; and the utmost satisfaction is expressed on all sides from both cities. With these examples before them Eastern cities are adopting the Des Moines plan, and there are many notable indications of its growing popularity throughout the country. Yet the charter convention of Chicago (pp. 804, 879) is pottering away at a charter of the old crazy-quilt kind. Chicago statesmen do not yet appear to have heard that anything new in the way of charter-making has come to light since the great fire.

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Police Veracity.

In his admirable statement before the City Club of Chicago on the 12th, of his work at purifying the ballot (pp. 868, 876), Frank J. Loesch candidly declared that policemen cannot be relied upon to expose political frauds. He was careful to say that this is not because policemen are wicked beyond other men, but because they are expected by superiors to "go the distance" in the direction of which their superiors want them to go. If they shrink, obstacles are thrown in the way of promotion, and toboggan slides are conveniently