

## The Great Taboo

HOW far the control of the press by privileged interests goes is strikingly illustrated in the widespread publicity given the great reforming Egyptian ruler, Anknaton, in connection with the recent opening of the tomb of his successor, Tut-ankh-amen. The story of the monarch who abandoned the idol worship of his ancestors, and preached a pure monotheism, has been retold in the daily newspapers and in the magazines and weekly journals. In not one instance out of hundreds of references to this great man has there been the slightest mention of the noteworthy fact, clearly stated in all histories of his reign, that he had worked to destroy the system under which so large a part of the Egyptian lands were held by the high priests. He taught that the land rightly belonged to all the people, and made efforts to secure a fairer and juster distribution of it among the landless poor. This was the chief reason why his efforts failed. The high priests, representing the landlords of his day, were too powerful, and the foolish Egyptians returned to their idol worship and land monopoly.

This was all more than 3,000 years ago. But so timid is privilege that it doesn't want the fact that there is a land question mentioned. The subject is "Taboo." The newspapers suppress all discussion of the great fundamental fact that by the laws of all what are termed "civilized countries" the earth and the fullness thereof are owned by a handful of men who have secured possession by force or by fraud. As a merry jest these newspaper tools of privilege are denominated: "The palladium of our liberties—a free and unfettered press."

## New York's Exemption Law Attacked

THE New York State law permitting localities to exempt new dwellings for ten years, has been held unconstitutional by Justice Tierney of the State Supreme Court; this, however, is a lower court, corresponding to what are termed county courts in most States, and there are two higher courts; an appeal was argued before the first of these March 29. The grounds given by Justice Tierney are, that the State constitution forbids the legislature from passing private or local bills "granting to any person or corporation" exemption from taxation. This provision has heretofore been thought merely to forbid the granting of exemptions to particular persons or corporations specified in the law and not at all to interfere with legislation permitting localities to exempt specified classes of property. There is no question but that the legislature of New York may by general law, exempt any class of property or tax it at special rates and there are many of such laws now operative. The general opinion of competent authorities is that the law will be upheld by the higher courts.

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that this attack on the law has brought out many favorable expressions of

opinion from the newspapers and individuals. Mr. Samuel Untermyer, who was counsel for the legislative committee on housing, volunteered his services to represent on appeal the people who have built homes relying on the tax exemption law. Former Magistrate Henry H. Curran, Republican candidate for Mayor at the last election, and who as President of the Board of Aldermen worked actively for this tax exemption law, calls the decision "the biggest plum that has fallen into the lap of landlords who would be profiteers, since the troubles of the tenant began."

Borough President Connolly of Queens says: "I believe the tax exemption law was of immense value. It has increased our population enormously and in addition has increased the value of our real estate." Patrick J. Reville, Superintendent of Buildings in the Borough of the Bronx, says: "The exemption ordinance is the most constructive piece of legislation that has been passed in all my forty years of building experience. In the Bronx there have been filed plans for \$150,000,000 of building construction since January 1, 1922, and two-thirds of this has been completed. If building stops the situation will be as serious as it was in 1920 before the housing laws were passed."

The New York *World* says editorially that the decision "threatens to bring rent-payers again face to face with the harsh conditions of a housing shortage from which they were beginning to escape through the operations of the Tax Exemption Act."

Of course, as was to be expected, the decision is warmly commended by some of our leading real estate speculators, who have visions of higher rents and selling prices if the housing shortage can be continued or increased.

## Not the Public's Business

IT is not the public's business to say what distribution shall be made of wealth at the death of the owner. The fact that both National and State governments have the power to take in taxes all or a part of the property of a dead man does not make such action right. The tax on inheritances is as distinctly a violation of property rights as was the seizing of all wealth by the Russian Soviet Government.

The only sound, scientific, and equitable tax is one laid on the rental value of land, exclusive of improvements. Why waste time discussing makeshift taxes when the natural law of taxation points so clearly to the true method for securing all the revenue needed?

JOSEPH DANA MILLER, in *Colliers*.

L. R. CLEMENTS, of Knoxville, Iowa, writes to the *Fairhope Courier*, as follows:

"I do believe if Henry George were alive today, he would never designate the move by any name of Single Tax, in fact I do not find anywhere in his writings that he speaks of it particularly as a fit name for the great cause of freeing the earth."