

Will Germany Lead the Way

Continued from Page 8

the movement as corporate members, representing no fewer than 800,000 sympathizers. Among the number many large towns have allied themselves specifically with the land reform by instructing their municipal councils to join in a body. Who can doubt that with all this leaven at work in every corner of the land the whole lump will some day be leavened?

Land Leaguers' Activities

From the League's Headquarters in Berlin a long series of propagandist activities radiate. Meetings are arranged in every part of the country, in charge of the ablest speakers a cause could wish. Literature of a kind not easily gainsaid is widely circulated, the compelling nature of the message being easily credited when regard is had to the college professors responsible for most of the pamphlets. Current events are seized upon to back home in letters to the press the grievous inequalities of the land tenure in vogue. The rousing blast of the "Bodenreform", the organ of the party, reverberates throughout the length and breadth of the land as it has done regularly, but with increasing volume for the past twenty years, summoning an awakened manhood against the strongly-entrenched privileged aristocracy. A "Free Economic Seminary" is maintained the year round by the Berlin central office to which prominent educationists and government officials contribute lectures of popular interest, but bearing more or less directly on the League's platform. Finally, a bureau of information supplies expert legal advice to those in difficulties regarding mortgage laws and the new land taxes.

Motive Power Enough?

So much for the machinery. The mechanism, it must be admitted, is not only excellent in type—it is complete. But is there motive power enough to drive the machinery? The exhaustless energy and enthusiasm of the leaders fortunately, sets at rest any such doubt. The record of the past decade, moreover, demonstrates that all the power was not expended in the elaborate array of machinery provided. As previously intimated, the Boden reformers have laid the stress on municipal, rather than on national action. Not that they are unwilling to enter the wider field as soon as they feel justified, but more rapid progress, they believe, will be made by showing the people concretely through municipal experiments in land reform what they may expect to gain by the broader adoption of Henry George's principles. Whatever proves a success in a town, the state legislature does not hesitate to apply in its larger domain, for efficiency and economy are reckoned more essential attributes of government in Germany than in some other lands more familiar to Anglo-Saxons.

Land Values Taxed

Almost every Prussian community now taxes the land within its borders at its selling value. This innovation was fathered by Prussia's ablest Minister of Finance as long ago as 1894, but it was not until recently that the municipalities made much real use of this weapon. In 1904 Frankfort-on-Main went a step farther, levying a tax on the increase of value at the sale of land. In the eight years since the adoption of this measure, five hundred communities have followed suit, many large cities among the number.

As the pebble cast into the pond sends forth ever-widening ripples, so these municipal measures could not be confined within their narrow original bounds but eventually made their influence felt throughout the Imperial sphere. The success of the new method of taxation in raising revenue which did not bear heavily on anyone (except that the land speculator was shorn of his unjust gains) was so apparent that even the politicians who ran might read. An Imperial law, accordingly, came into force one year ago obliging every German community to tax the increase in land values. Of the revenue thus obtained, the Berlin Government takes 50 per cent, the community keeps 40 per cent and the sovereign state in which the community is situated is given the remaining 10 per cent.

Faulty as the measure is, hedged about with divers exceptions and provisos concerning interest on original investment, the educational value of the law has been

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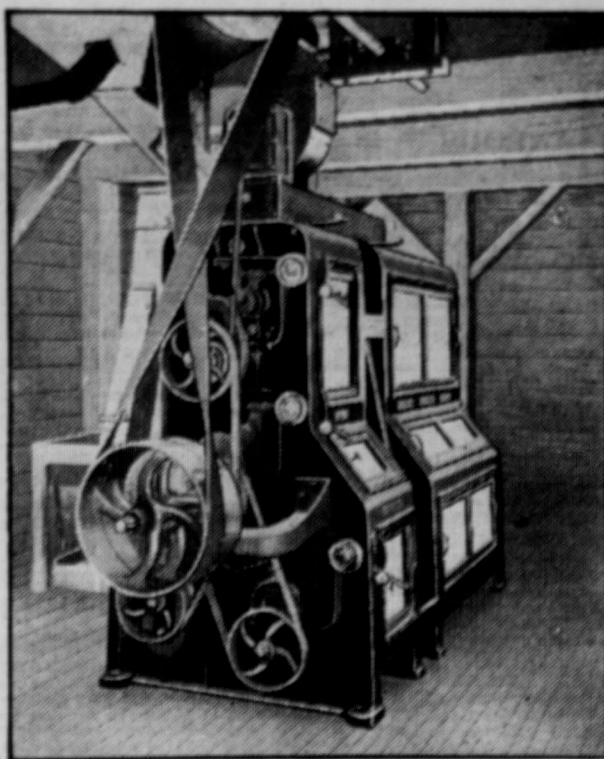
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