

Questions of the Day.

LAND GRANTS.

Some days ago the newspapers stated that the Assembly of the Northwest Territories intended making some reparation to the Northwest half-breeds by making land grants equal to 160 acres each. A few days later it was stated that the Dominion Government was going to make a similar provision to the volunteers who participated in the Fenian invasion of 1867. If both statements are in the main correct, and this action is put in operation, the men responsible for the enactment of such legislation deserve to be kicked out of the legislative halls of the country. What right has any government to give away absolutely the land to any individual or any number of individuals? Because some governments have done it, and are still guilty of the practice, is no valid reason for continuing a pernicious wrong. The great crime of past and present civilizations has been the bartering away of the people's heritage—the land. The enormity of the crime, and it is a very grave one, is only now beginning to be understood in its proper light; and should our governments follow at this late day the practices carried out by the governments which preceded them, a lasting disgrace will inevitably rest upon the people allowing such.

There would be little fault to find if it were proposed to allow the beneficiaries referred to a certain portion of free government land for a stipulated rental year, and to have the use and enjoyment of it forever so long as the rental value of the land was paid. Because in so doing the equal right of every other man in the community to the land would be maintained. The rental value of the land would be then the price paid to the community, for the right of exclusive possession guaranteed to all, thus conserving to the people their natural heritage.

When the land is given away to individuals in perpetuity the rights of those now living and those yet unborn are trampled upon and destroyed. My right to the land and your right, how can it be had when all free land is given away, except we purchase it from those who now control it?

An iniquitous wrong was done when the Dominion Government handed over to the C. P. railroad millions of acres and which is entirely free from taxation, that blunder having been committed, and it is now generally admitted to be so. It is to be hoped our legislators will prove themselves statesmen and safeguard the little that remains of the people's birthright.

RAILROAD HIGHWAYS BY A SINGLE TAX.

Rossland wants a railway through the Crow's Nest Pass. The single tax would give it. The Rosslanders are now foolishly paying that tax to the men they have allowed to secure the town site. If they were wise enough to pay it into their public treasury, it would soon build them a railway which they would own. They are now begging a railway from other Canadians quite as foolish as themselves. In Rossland, as in every other part of the world, the single tax, the annual value of the land, must be paid. The wealth producers have not the option of paying or not paying it to the public treasury, or paying it to the men they have allowed to assume ownership of the surface. They prefer to pay it to a few lucky grabbers, so they are unable, like the rest of us, to build their own railway. If they knew enough to keep their own they would not be depending on anyone else for a high-

way. They have gone into the manufacture of milllions, which is the most unprofitable line of business ever devised. They bow their necks to a few task-masters, who will levy the single tax on them for a generation, and at the same time cry out against any suggestion of instituting the single tax.

Rosslanders are beginning. Let them take, in taxation, the rental of land for public uses and they will soon be the richest community on the continent. The richest mines are the town sites.

LAND THE SOURCE FOR REVENUE. FRANCE.

In the year 1890, the total sum of taxes levied on land values, and which was added to the general fund of government revenues, amounted to 255 million francs, \$52,000,000.

PRUSSIA.

In the German Empire several of the states levy on land values for taxation. From 1810-1820, the Prussian tax "was reformed," and again in 1861, when the tax on houses was separated from the tax on land. At that time, the tax on land was computed at 10,000,000 thalers, \$7,500,000. By the acquisition of the new Prussian provinces in 1866, the amount was increased to \$10,000,000.

"In addition to local taxes," says Bastable, "are not easily arrived at, but for the year 1880-81, the communal and provincial extra land taxes were equal to those of the state in amount (\$10,000,000), giving a total burden on land of \$20,000,000, independent of the income tax."

AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY.

In 1879 the general land tax was fixed at 36,100,000 florins. The local tax on land (municipalities) was believed to reach a like amount. The Hungarian land tax amounts to almost the same. Dr. Fr. Mintz says that Vienna raises a large part of its city revenue from the ground rents of the site of the old city wall.

BELGIUM.

Belgium manages to raise from land values about \$2,500,000 for national and \$1,500,000 for local purposes.

SPAIN.

As in France, Prussia and other countries a tax on land was levied (1890-91) for local purposes by the general government in the same way as the tax for general purposes. The total tax raised for local purposes amounting to 17,000,000 pesetas—\$1,400,000, which is a very small proportion of the total amount raised for governmental expenditures.

It has always been a principle in Spain when Columbus and the other discoverers came to America, the Crown always reserved the right to all precious metals found, although it sometimes conceded a share to the discoverer.

PORTUGAL.

levies a land tax, which yields about \$3,250,000 yearly.

The total annual income of England, according to Dr. R. Giffen, of the Board of Trade, in 1848 was £520,000,000, and of that £278,000,000 went for wages and £242,000,000 for rent and interest and profit on capital. In 1882 the total annual wealth had increased to the enormous sum of £1,300,000,000, and of that £338,000,000 went for wages and £962,000,000 for rent and interest and profit on capital. If the same proportion had been maintained as in 1848 the amount of wages instead of being £338,000,000 would have been £695,000,000.

Baron Halkett, a German-born citizen of England, speaking before a Lancashire audience in June, 1894, said he was one of those wicked people who believed that land, air and water were made for the people, and that man did not have a hand in making them and that therefore no man had an absolute claim to any portion of them.

The land, as they all knew, had been monopolized as absolute ownership, at all events in this country, and every inch of it was claimed by somebody.

He maintained that every member of the community had a claim to a share in the land of his country, and upon the realization of this scheme rested the freedom of the nation.

On the other hand, he held that every person who occupied and cultivated a portion of the soil should be fully secured in his labor, and in the investment of his capital upon that soil, because upon that rested the prosperity of agriculture. It was said that agriculture did not pay because wheat was so cheap; but that was not so; it was because land was so dear. But it was not only over the surface of the soil that landlords exerted their sway; they claimed everything that lay under the soil. He thought the absurdity of this claim was only equalized by its injustice. English trade was shrinking; employment at a fair wage was getting less, and the only man who could sit still and do nothing was the landlord, who was taxing industry and strangling it in its operations.

This claim of private ownership to the mineral wealth of the country was nothing more or less than a tax upon the whole industry of the country. This question of the claims to private ownership for all that lay beneath the soil was not a question as affecting those engaged in the material obtained, but was a question which affected every consumer in the land.

In Germany no owner of the surface freehold of land has the slightest claim to the minerals below. Anyone who wishes to invest his money in mining secures a permit from the State, and after he has paid a small compensation for surface disturbance to the owner he exploits the industry for himself and his workers, and pays the State a royalty of 2 per cent. on the net profits. In addition to this he must pay half the funds (the other half being paid to the State) to the Miners' Association, which go for education, sick pay, pensions and damages in case of accidents.

EXPENSIVE LEGAL PRACTICES.

To carry appeals to the British Privy Council regarding disputed points of Federal and Provincial jurisdiction is a foolish waste of money on law costs. If the Province and Dominion authorities really want a decision they can decide to ride by that of our own Supreme Court. The Canadian judiciary must necessarily have a better idea of the meaning of the British North America Act than can the British legal luminaries. The courts are created by Parliaments, but there is a superstitious reverence for their functions which prevents people seeing the absurdity of following out case after case from one court to another, to find what will be thought in the last. The decision will not be more wise or more just because it is more expensive. W.

The Delaware Single Tax Campaign

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