

ceeded, "men of judgment have expressed to me the opinion that were a vote to be taken on the proposition that all estates over \$100,000 revert to the state upon the death of the owner—the \$100,000 being exempt—it would be carried two to one."

There is no doubt that it would. And herein lies the danger of the position, not alone to men of wealth, but to the entire community. Laws relating to Wills and Intestacy are within the legislative power of the individual states; and any state Legislature may repeal its Wills Act, as well as abolish or alter legislative provisions for the devolution of estates upon intestacy. Both the Federal Government and individual state Governments may increase Inheritance Taxes to an extent which would practically confiscate all large fortunes; there is no constitutional impediment. But is it to the public interest to do so?

It is undeniably true that there exists among large masses of the people profound dissatisfaction with the existing distribution of wealth in the Republic. That "no man can in a lifetime honestly accumulate a million dollars" expresses a belief generally held; and in the public mind the corollary follows that all estates greater than this have been dishonestly acquired. "The Trusts" and "Wall Street" are all thieves together: such is the belief of the majority of voters.

It must not be overlooked that we are dealing not with facts that actually exist; but with what the mass of voters, rightly or wrongly, believe. It is their belief, possibly consciously or unconsciously coloured by a selfish wish to possess themselves of the accumulated wealth of others, that tells at the ballot-box.

The Federal Income Tax is said to be drawn so as to exempt all incomes under \$5,000 per annum; and it is estimated that there are only 400,000 people in the United States who will be unable to escape taxation under it. Of course it is popular; since this small number are to be taxed for the benefit of the many. Such a law, if submitted generally to the voters of the country, would be sure to be carried not only two to one, but one hundred to one.