

attacking the bonding system. We cannot say that the view of the Secretary of the Treasury is not fairly deducible from the circumstances in which the Bonding Act was passed. Native produce will not be affected by this ruling, though the traffic of the C.P.R. will suffer to some extent.

By an Act of the Ontario Legislature passed last session, authority is conferred on municipal councils to substitute a business tax for the present tax on personalty. And, when the holidays are over, city and town councils may be expected to discuss the propriety of making the change. The question is not one of abolishing a tax, but of changing the form of it. To the tax on personalty there are grave objections. Traders often refrain from appealing against excessive assessment lest their credit should suffer by their being made out less wealthy than they are. Even the business tax which would require to be substituted for the tax on personalty, might not be perfectly equitable; but as it would be based on the rental of the place in which the business is conducted, it would perhaps be as fair as any practicable measure could be. And the great advantage would be that it would not be inquisitorial or manacng to the credit of the payers of it. There is a limit to the amount to which this tax may go, $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the rental value of the premises. The merchants are generally in favor of the change, for which good reasons exist, while there are none worth considering why it should not be made.

SOCIALISTIC THEORIES IN AMERICA.

Whether or not the author of the last of the Utopias, *Looking Backward*, intended his work to be taken as seriously prophetic, it is certain that it is being so taken by a large number of persons of both sexes, who lack the knowledge to prevent their falling into so clumsy a trap. In the August number of the *Forum*, Professor Goldwin Smith has a delicate and suggestive criticism of the extraordinary doctrines promulgated by the author of *Looking Backward*. That author, by means of a magnetic trance, projects himself a hundred years into the future, and contrasts the new world in which he finds himself, on awaking, with that which existed before, in our time. While in form he is looking back, he is for us uttering a prophecy. The great change predicted is that the State has become possessed of all individual property, and the sole employer of labor. On this revolution Professor Smith remarks:

"The State has become the sole capitalist and the individual employer. How did all the capital pass from the hands of private individuals or private companies into those of the State? Was it by a voluntary and universal surrender? Were all the capitalists and all the stockholders convinced of the blessings of self-spoliation? Or did the Government, by a sweeping act of confiscation, seize all the capital? Was the entrance into Paradise effected by a civil war? The seer was in a magnetic

trance when the transfer took place, and he had not the curiosity to ask Dr. Leete how it was effected. For us, therefore, the problem remains unsolved."

That all capital should pass into the hand of the State is the legitimate outcome of the theory of Henry George, who proposes such a beginning should be made by the confiscation of the land. No sensible person allows himself to be deceived by the notion that all other forms of property might remain sacred while one had been given over to the demon of confiscation, and the deed done under the false pretence of levying a tax for which the necessities of the State did not call. If the owner of any other form of property proposes to accept the Georgian theory, in the hope that it will be the means of freeing his own from its equitable contribution to the needs of the State, let him take warning from the prophecy of Mr. Bellamy. It is not one kind of property that Socialism, in its most pestilent form, seeks to wrest from individual owners, but all. The Internationals discuss the project in their European assemblies, in perfectly cold blood and with the utmost candor. Some of them supply the link which the author of *Looking Backward* lost while in his trance. They tell us that when a man dies, his property should go to the State. In this way a single generation would suffice for the social revolution. But this is only the theory of how it may be brought about. The confiscation would be certain to be resisted by those who have a natural right to the property, and the attempted confiscation might prove abortive; if successful, success would come only as the result of a bloody revolution. To suppose that people would give up their property without a struggle, is to assume that man will be so transformed that we should not know him. Of such a being, in the absence of all experience, we could predicate nothing, much less foresee a new scheme of life in all its details, in which the State would be everything and the individual nothing. Under the scheme sketched for the delectation of the novel reader's fancy, it is easy to see that the individual would own nothing, not even himself, since he would become so completely the creature of the State that the effacement of the individual would be absolute. And this is the earthly bliss to which we are invited to aspire, making our way, the only one open to us, through rivers of blood. We are asked to take the first steps in this path through land confiscation, done up in harmless parcels, labelled "Single Tax," "Anti-Poverty," or some other fantastic disguise. What is necessary to guard against just now are these first steps and the false pretences in which it is sought to enshrine them.

The right of bequeathing property is a natural right, the denial of which would be an interference with the liberty of the individual. It is a right which may sometimes require to be guarded against abuse. Those who bring children into the world are bound to provide for them, and if this obligation did not exist the State would find itself burthened with vast numbers of unfortunates, the support of whom it would

find difficult or impossible. The result would be social degradation of a pronounced type. If the State were universal proprietor, it would be unable to supply the incentives, the care, the oversight which the spur of individual ownership brings. The loss of moral force would be incalculable; waste would produce ravages without bounds; chaos would take the place of order, and civilization would be in danger of being engulfed in the social catastrophe. Humanity, instead of marching to perfection, would become retrograde, and the guarantees for the protection of society and of the individual would be weakened or destroyed. When the right of testamentary disposition of property is not exercised, it is more natural that the property should go to the nearest relatives than to the State. When they are children, they are in some sense the continuators of the authors of their being, special qualities both of mind and body are being transmitted, and there is a sense in which parents continue to live in their offspring, as men live in the works that survive them. The State could not seize all the property of individuals without committing an act of monstrous violence; and unless it were to do this, the Utopia of Mr. Bellamy will not materialize.

If it be true as reported that Mr. Bellamy did not write *Looking Backward* with a purpose, and has been astonished at it being taken seriously, he may possibly realize, in some degree, the unintentional mischief he is doing. Bellamy Societies are being formed by the hundred to realize the Socialistic dream of the book, a spectacle which, complimentary as it is intended to be to the author, may well appal him at the possible consequences of his work. Not that the dream will be realized—that is out of the question—but an incalculable amount of mischief may be wrought.

WEST INDIA TRADE.

Since writing last week on the subject of the coming exhibition in Jamaica and on possible trade with that island, we have received from the Toronto agent of the West India line of steamers a letter which will be found in another column. This gentleman has worked hard to create or stimulate an interest in West India trade in this province, and writes in very sanguine terms of the prospects of commerce both inwards and outwards. But some patience is needed, as well as continuous hard work, before direct trade between such distant points as Kingston, Jamaica, and Toronto, can be established. Importers or exporters are not to be got to leave old connections and make new ones without good reasons being shown them for such steps. Regularity and promptness of communication are among the first essentials if a new route is to recommend itself.

To have a steamer from St. John to West India ports once in five or six weeks is of course something. But we cannot hope to build up say a fruit trade with vessels at such intervals. If we remember rightly, it was stipulated by the Canadian Government that the line, subsidised as it is, would