

## Trusts and Society

From the Scottish Co-operator

In writing of the evolution of society we have many times pointed out that the final struggle of co-operation would be when we were face to face with the large trusts and syndicates which are coming into existence as the inevitable result of the competitive system, and we have urged the necessity of being prepared for that struggle and understanding what is likely to be the next step in the evolution, as the triumphant monopoly of the capitalistic concerns would mean slavery and degradation for the great masses of the people.

Conditions in the United States of America are not similar to those in this country, because there co-operation, as we know it, has taken a comparatively small hold. On the other hand, trusts and syndicates have developed at a great rate, and now there are few departments of industry and commerce which are not controlled by huge capitalistic concerns. A good many years ago, Dr. Talmage, of New York, in a volume of sermons said:—"The shadowing curse of the United States today is monopoly. He puts his hand upon every bushel of wheat, upon every sack of salt, upon every ton of coal; and every man, woman and child in the United States feels the touch of that moneyed despotism." Since these words were written the capitalistic concerns of the United States have increased immensely in size and in influence, and it is truer now than ever that there is no country in the world in which combinations are so powerful and individuals so powerless as the United States, and probably no country in which the labor question may be so difficult, thus proving that mere forms of government count for little, and that we may have as little personal freedom under republican institutions as under monarchies.

Thoughtful men in America have long recognised that the great problem before them is to prevent the great Republic from being a free country in name only. The difficulty is to decide what steps ought to be taken. President Roosevelt recognised the problem and saw the difficulty, and he raised the opposition of the capitalistic magnates by the expression of his opinions and his suggestions for the regulation of the trusts. On several occasions we have directed attention to a book written fifteen years ago by H. D. Lloyd, entitled "Wealth Against Commonwealth," in which he traced the growth of the Standard Oil Company and other huge combinations and showed their effects on the welfare of the country, and he insisted that the real question is not whether monopoly is to continue, as he believed that the sun sets every night on a greater majority against it. He insisted that the people were face to face with the practical issue: Is the country to go through ruin or reform? Attempts have been made at legislation to prevent some of the evils, but its effects have been very small. The Inter-State Commerce Act, which was intended to regulate affairs, has been in operation for more than twenty years, yet the lines imposed under it have only, it is stated, reached a few thousand pounds. Such methods of procedure are simply ridiculous, as the capitalists can easily recoup themselves by a small increase in prices. Various attempts have been made to bring the Standard Oil Company within the scope of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, another piece of legislation which has been very nearly futile. The United States Circuit Court of Appeal for Missouri has just decided that the Standard Oil Company is a combination in restraint of trade, and is constituted in violation of the Act. Four eminent judges have come unanimously to the opinion that the Trust must be dissolved. Some time ago another Court imposed a very heavy fine on the Company—amounting to many million dollars—but on appeal to a higher Court the whole matter was quashed, and we are not too sanguine that much will result from the latest judgment. Rich corporations have wonderful ways of circumventing the law, and it is represented that should the worst happen, and the Standard Oil Company be broken up, the results, so far as the oil industry is concerned, might not be greatly altered, as it might be possible so to manipulate matters that the Trust would still be able to

wield the power, though it could not be exercised by a corporate body.

We cannot, of course, go into details of conditions in America. Our present object is to take the attention of our readers beyond the details of their own movement as at present carried on, and cause them to consider the wider movement which is going on around them. What is to be the relation of the trusts which are growing up to society? Is it possible for them so to be regulated that they may serve the interests of the people as a whole, or will they become absorbed in the greater society which is society itself? These are problems which demand earnest and thoughtful study.

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### WORLD'S CROP

Final figures of the 1909 wheat world's crop confirms the earlier estimates that production was the greatest known. Broomhall, the English statistician, makes the gain over last season 373,000,000 bushels and 360,000,000 greater than the average previous years. The gain in production over the 1908 crop was 12.1 per cent. and the four year average 11.6 per cent. These larger returns suggest that nature and the producer responded very well to the needs of the world, or, at least, have answered the call for more breadstuffs. Six months' distribution of a huge crop, nevertheless, has not resulted in any accumulation of wheat. Judged by the position of the cash wheat in all markets, supply and demand, while not so closely adjusted as to make for an acute stringency, such as prevented the latter part of 1908-09, is still at a moderate reserve total. Based on the large 1909 crop, the high prices still prevailing for wheat prove puzzling to many. While it is admitted the great gold output has tended to raise commodity prices so to easily demonstrated that supply and demand is still the most effective factor in the rise of wheat prices. As an additional influence, the holding power of the American farmer must also be accounted a responsible agent. However it is not improbable that another liberal harvest would result in lower prices. The Hungarian minister of agriculture, an authority of continental Europe, makes the world's harvest 3,432,000,000 bushels or 10,000,000 bushels more than Broomhall.

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### A Farmers' Policy

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property, would be taxed in proportion to their value and the money expended not exclusively for the benefit of the city, but for the benefit of the surrounding rural districts as well.

A municipal tax on land values would not accomplish this end. A county tax would to some extent. A provincial land tax would do so to a much greater extent. Suppose that a special provincial tax on land values were levied for the purpose of providing better roads, electric car service, telephones, etc., for the rural districts, what an evening up effect it would have. Wherever land values are taxed, the price of land is prevented from rising. Wherever the tax money is expended in needed public improvements and public services the price of land increases, or is prevented from declining. The taxation of the valuable land in the cities and towns and the expenditure of the money in giving to the country more of the conveniences that are now almost exclusively confined to the city areas would pull down those enormous values in the cities and enhance the value of rural land to a very large extent. Such a policy would do more than anything else that was ever proposed towards solving the problem of keeping the boys and girls on the farm. If we would do this we must make country life more attractive. This can be done only by giving to the country as many as possible of the advantages of city life. This is one of the most important functions of the taxation of land values.

The first step towards the desired goal is to get the municipal and county taxes transferred to land values exclusively and this the proposed amendment to the assessment act, which is now being petitioned for by over 200 municipal councils in Ontario would make possible. Every farmer in the province should exert every effort to further this movement. A provincial tax as above outlined will soon follow.

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