

THE INDUSTRIAL BROTHERHOOD PROGRAMME.

The association which had taken for its name "The Industrial Brotherhood of America," has found it desirable to change its cognomen to "The Industrial Brotherhood of Canada." One of the declared aims of the order is to secure "equal opportunities" to all men and women, white, black and copper colored. How equal opportunities can be given to the poor that are within reach of the well-to-do, not to mention the rich, is a problem of some difficulty, compassable only, if at all, in a socialistic community, and we fancy not even there. It is the different uses which people make of their opportunities that is largely responsible for the difference in the condition of different individuals. So it ever was, and so it will be to the end of the chapter.

The possession of property is a means of creating opportunities, and until there is an equal distribution of property, there cannot be an equal distribution of opportunities. The assertion of the right to equal opportunities implies the right to equal shares of property. Now this right does not exist, has no foundation in natural justice. The children of A have no natural right to share the property of B, supposing there to be no relationship between them. Equal opportunities to all could only be created by taking from those who, or whose forefathers have, saved what others in like circumstances spent, which would in fact be robbery, a poor foundation on which to build the social edifice.

The platform of the Brotherhood is built of the craziest of timber, of which survey the following plank: "That all money shall be issued by the National Government direct to the people, without the intervention of banks; that all national issues shall be a full legal tender for all debts, public and private, and that the Government shall not guarantee or recognize any private banks or charter any banking corporations." Without any explanation of what is here called money, it is difficult to understand what is meant; but the "full legal tender" spoken of is presumably a bit of paper with no real money at the back of it. Such money would not buy goods abroad, except at double or treble prices, and if there were no other money it would soon cease to buy anything. Depending on the quantity, its depreciation would be little or much. This is not an unproved theory; it is the established rule of Government paper money with no coin at the back of it, everywhere and at all times. There are plenty of illustrations of the working of this law in active force in different countries to-day. Canada does not need to add another to test its truth, which is as certain as that two and two make four. We are not aware that our Government "guarantees" any banks. But that no banking corporations should be chartered is the wildest of wild notions. The primary business of banking is not, as is apparently here implied, the issuing of notes; it is rather the collecting and re-lending of the surplus money of the community. Without banks to perform functions

altogether apart from the issue of notes, the community would revert to a state of semi-barbarism. Another plank, of similar form and texture, forbids the Government to issue any interest-bearing obligations, and insists that it shall content itself with the issue of "legal tender, non-interest bearing money." Fiat money again! But who would take it? and on what terms?

In this connection, the land confiscation theory comes fittingly in: "The taxes upon land should be levied upon its full value for use," improvements excepted, the object being that all "unearned increment" should go to the community. If the land taken as a whole had never been improved, it would never have increased in value. There are odd farm lots, here and there, which have not been improved, which, or some of which, farmers have bought their children for future occupation. If they were taxed at their full value, that is, the basis of the price paid for them, the owner would lose what he paid and would have no temptation to improve. This confiscation would fit in well with the payment in fiat money of debts contracted under a gold standard, mere bits of paper which would soon come to be worth little or nothing. And this sort of money, we are told, ought to be lent to the farmers "at the lowest possible rates," as a means of superseding existing mortgages. Such money as this, issued for so many purposes, would be dear at any rate, and would soon come to be worth nothing.

But the new functions of the Government are not to end here. It is to "obtain, by purchase or expropriation, the control of all steamship lines, telegraphs, telephones and railways," and is to grant no charters for any of these enterprises. What is it to pay in? Fiat money, of course, since it is forbidden to borrow any real money. If all these things were done, Government fiat money would probably not be worth a cent in the dollar.

There are eighteen planks in the platform of the Industrial Brotherhood of Canada; but we need not waste more space with them. These brotherhoods are, as a rule, worked by salaried officers, who do the organizing and take the money. The dupes are as honest as men can be who assent to confiscation schemes which they only half understand, if at all. Of the platform framers the most charitable theory is that they are ignorant of what would be the effect of their teaching if it were reduced to practice. These notions come to us from the United States; they are not born of our soil; some of them come ultimately from Europe, the rest are American.

Between people who talk the language of this platform and the American millionaires, whose wealth has been largely increased by watered stocks and other fraudulent devices, there is not much to choose. Each is a danger to social order, and one is in some sort the cause and the complement of the other. Between abusive and legitimate methods of acquiring wealth the distinction is not always sufficiently marked in the public mind, and the mere possession of wealth comes to be treated as legitimate prey. The public has

the greatest interest in preventing this confusion becoming anything like predominant. If wealth is to continue to be made, as in the United States, by stock watering and oppressive combines, rapid development of socialism, as a supposed counterpoise, may be counted on. It cannot be said, with full assurance, that these two opposing social forces present no real danger to the community.

INEQUALITIES IN ASSESSMENT.

We observe that attention is drawn, in the report of the Hamilton Board of Trade, to the anomalies of the Ontario Assessment Act. Too much latitude is given to assessors, and too much is expected of them in that capacity. The result is glaring injustice. As it is stated by the Hamilton Board, "The mercantile and manufacturing classes are unequally and unfairly assessed, where the basis of their contribution to the city treasury is their capital, while other classes are taxed on income only, the disproportion being as 100 is to 6. Rent and interest are two different names for the same thing—occupants of any building pay the taxes. The merchants and manufacturers of this city use as business premises 26 per cent. of the real estate, and own or occupy as residences 17 per cent. more, so that their contribution to the taxes on real estate is 43 per cent."

The report goes on to say that the difficulty of interesting and educating the councils of each city in the involved nature of the business tax act, amidst many pressing private and public duties, has been fully felt in Hamilton, and concludes with the hope that the Legislature will "accept the responsibility of seeing the mercantile community justly assessed, either by making their business tax act mandatory or making the incidence of taxation alike for merchants, professional gentlemen and capitalists, that is, income only."

Other commercial bodies have taken up the question of assessment. Numbers of Toronto merchants feel themselves aggrieved by the unequal incidence of taxation, and, in view of the assessment bills now being rendered, the feeling is unusually strong. At a meeting of the Dry Goods Section of the Toronto Board of Trade recently held, it was resolved to petition the Government of Ontario to the following effect:

"Your petitioners, merchants and manufacturers, represent to you and your Government that the industrial classes of this province, viz., those employing capital in business and manufacture, are unjustly and unfairly taxed in local or municipal taxation.

"Your petitioners respectfully call your attention to these facts: that for municipal taxation a municipality can tax realty and personalty; that the mode and rate of assessment on realty is alike to all classes of citizens. The value of the realty being the basis of assessment, the rate must be the same; but unfortunately when personalty assessment is dealt with, the Act allows the assessor the option of taxing either on income or capital, a monstrous privilege and power, which is universally