

The Mail Bag

AN OPEN FORUM

This page is maintained to allow free discussion of all questions vital to western farmers. Up to the limit of space letters will be published giving both sides of all such questions. It is not possible to publish all letters received, but an effort will be made to select those most fairly representing different views. Short letters will be given preference. All letters must be accompanied by name and address of writer, the not necessarily for publication. Unsent letters will be returned if accompanied by postage.

LAND OF LIBERTY

Editor, Guide:—When shall we be able to say that our land will be liberated to all the people, as was intended by Divine Providence from the first, but was changed by man to the present form in order that a landed class might take toll from a landless mass? And if it is a fact that the present land policy was brought into existence by man, then it is a fact that this unfair land policy can be changed back to its original form by man, which was a free land for all the people.

Now, let us examine for a moment how monopolized land prevents progress. The monopolization of land means high priced land, and I claim that the higher the price of land the poorer the country is as a whole, and the lower the price of land the richer the country will be as a whole, for the following reasons: It surely must be patent to any reasonable man that it does cost more to produce a bushel of wheat from \$50 land than it costs from the same land at \$10 per acre. One hundred acres of land at \$50 per acre creates an overhead expense of \$5,000. One hundred acres of land at \$10 per acre creates an overhead expense of \$1,000, just 20 per cent. of the overhead expense on the same land.

In addressing several meetings in Ontario lately, with the organized farmers of that province, I put this question to several of the meetings: "Can any farmer in this meeting stand up and truthfully say that he receives a reasonable wage for his labor and the labor of his wife and family, and at the same time gets a reasonable interest on his investment?" I found no man could make such a claim, and I venture this statement, that few, if any, of our western farmers can truthfully make the claim. Of course there will always be exceptions. I also claim that our land at \$10 an acre will produce more than the same land will produce at \$50 per acre, for the reason that when a man with limited means starts on a farm, and we will suppose that \$2,500 is all the money he has got, if he buys 100 acres of land at \$50 per acre he has just sufficient to pay 50 per cent. of the purchase price, and therefore is compelled to mortgage for the other 50 per cent., and then he is left with a mortgage hanging over his head and without capital, which is an absolute necessity to enable him to operate his farm in the manner he might desire. Therefore, it is plain that such conditions are a heavy handicap on production and prosperity. But if he could buy that same land at \$10 per acre, he could pay the full purchase price and have no mortgage hanging over his head, and still have sufficient capital in hand to enable him to work that land as he might desire, therefore increasing production and prosperity. High priced land means successful mortgage companies, much of whose stock is held in foreign countries, and by this means much of the profits that should go to the producer finds its way into the coffers of foreign millionaires. One of the causes of scarcity of money in the country is high priced land, and it is also one of the causes of high priced money. The money we get by mortgaging our land we cannot keep for the purpose it had been intended for, for much of it goes to meet high rates of interest and to pay for the commodities we are compelled to purchase at easily one-third more than the actual value. Those conditions will continue just so long as the present insane methods of taxation continue.

Present System Legalized Stealing

The present system of collecting taxes, to my mind, means nothing more or less than legalized stealing, and the direct cause of high priced land, because the system enables the owners of the land to take in the form of rent or by speculative prices all the land can possibly give up for labor, less a bare

living, and not all the necessities of life, to those who are working the land. The present methods of taxation are operated in this way:

First, the portion collected by direct and visible means is somewhat less than one-third the amount collected from the taxpayer. The other two-thirds or more is collected by an invisible means, or an indirect means, that is manipulated in a way to deceive the taxpayer, what the political economists have termed a "tariff for revenue" only, but it is protection in the true sense of the word, when the true colors are exposed. It works out like this: A farmer works half a section of land and, on the average, his visible tax will be about \$75, and his invisible tax, on the average, will be about \$300 per year. This half section farmer, we will suppose, is working his land right up to what he desires to do, and if he is a good farmer, and is raising a family, his purchases during the year will not be much less than \$1,000, on the whole. When he buys all the clothes that are necessary to go to church with, and all the clothes that are necessary to go to the field with, and all the implements, salaries, and groceries that he consumes during the year, it will not be any less than \$1,000, on an average. Therefore, out of the \$300 or more indirect taxation thru our protection or tariff system, \$200 of that goes to keep up protected interests, and about \$100 of that or less reaches the public treasurer, surely an expensive method. The above statements have never been denied by political economists, that one-third or less only reaches the public treasurer. Now, if that \$100 or less that reaches the public treasurer was collected by the same means as the \$75 is collected, thru a visible means, the farmer would then, in that case, pay about \$175 per year, whereas he now pays about \$375 per year. Therefore, is it not plain that the present method of collecting taxes is a means of legalized stealing? Then, let us abolish the invisible means of collecting taxes, and let us have a visible means of collecting them.

Of course, the protected interests will kick, and what else should we expect? They claim we are interfering with their vested rights, but it is our duty as a people to prevent those protected interests from robbing the people by the means of a vested wrong. Strange as it may seem, we will today find many farmers and others who help those protected interests in their unjust claims, but yet I do not believe that the great plain people, if all the facts were properly placed before them, would continue to help vested interests to take the shirt off their own backs, or off the backs of their families, or off their friends. If a man is to be loyal to anything in this world, surely he should be loyal to his country's public treasurer.

Means of Reform

How are we to accomplish the reform? In my opinion, it can and will be accomplished by Direct Legislation, by first getting Direct Legislation in force in all the provinces, and in this direction we are making splendid progress. It will show public opinion and public sentiment to be so strong that no political party on Parliament Hill can refuse to listen to that public demand, a demand for justice to all our people. We can and we must break down the power of vested interests and put an end to the present insane and invisible methods of collecting taxes by breaking down the present system of legalized stealing. If protected interests must be protected, whether right or wrong, then in the name of all that is good let us subsidize them by giving them a bonus of so much in every year. Then we will know to a cent just what it is costing each individual; then it will be distributed evenly over all the people who own land, city lots, or any

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