

The Mail Bag

EQUALITY OF NATURAL OPPORTUNITY

Editor, Guide:—Talk about war. Talk about the scarcity of money, or talk about dear money. Would it not be well to learn first that our trouble comes from dear land rather than dear money or the scarcity of money. I am pleased to notice so many good men taking up the question of getting land for the people to work on some conditions. That is one good thing, it appears, that the war has brought about. It has taught men to think more seriously of conditions that exist. If it had not been for the present war they would not probably have taken such action and shown conclusively that what we need is equality of natural opportunity. Would it not be better to have cheap land and lots of land? Why should land be scarce when there is so much land not in use? Why should land be scarce when there is so much land idle? Can there be any person so shortsighted that they really do not see the reason why land is so scarce and at the same time so much land lying idle not in use in so far as the great plain people are concerned. Well, we all know that such is the case, and we all know that idle land does not mean progress, and we all know that while we have so much idle land we are bound to have a very large landless mass, which is an unhealthy state of affairs for any country to exist under. What is the cause? The cause is not hard to find. It is all because of opportunity given under existing conditions which enables a class to gobble up the land. These conditions arise from our taxing system, the present means of collecting the revenue to finance the demands of government, federal, provincial and municipal, which is mostly collected by an invisible means, that is, what is called the invisible tax, which is the most diabolical way of skinning the public right before their eyes, and they do not see it. Here is where and how the iniquitous system gets its work in. For instance, take a farmer, or a laborer, or a business man who purchases \$1,000 worth of goods in a year, he gets about \$700 worth of goods and he pays about \$300 in taxes. Some call this revenue, but it is taxes just the same, and some say that this amount goes to the public treasury, but does it? All that goes to the public treasury is the portion of that purchase that comes from abroad. If he buys 50 per cent. from abroad, say \$500 worth, he will then put \$150 in the public treasury, and if he buys another \$500 worth from our home manufacturers then \$150 goes into the pockets of the manufacturers, and does not go into the public treasury, and it makes no difference whether it is machinery, vehicles or tools to labor with or the clothing for the rich or poor, the only difference being, as facts show, that the class of goods purchased by the poor is heavier taxed than that purchased by the rich.

Then, again, see what it costs to keep those brass buttons in position. For every dollar collected by this means, 75 cents reaches the public treasury and about 25 cents goes to keep up the expensive system. Imagine the cost of maintaining this army of brass buttons. Surely an expensive means of collecting taxes, to say nothing about the temptation that arises in the opportunity of getting away with graft, for there is no man feels that this is a fair means of taxing the people, and if a man can get away with anything he does not think it is dishonest to do so, and as long as this means of collecting taxes exists, that invisible means that is not fair from any standpoint we may wish to view it, land will be dear and land will be scarce in so far as the great plain people is concerned.

All because of inequality of natural opportunity, caused by this invisible taxing system.

The remedy: Abolish all invisible tax and give us a visible tax by collecting all taxes from the selling price of the land. Then we will know to a cent what amount of taxes we are paying. All that is necessary to bring the change about is absolute free trade, and then assess the land right up to its selling value, then strike the rate of so many mills on the dollar. This will increase the present tax on land and city lots to such an extent that by this means we will tax the man that holds land or city lots out of use clean out of the business of monopolization of land and speculation in land. Such men will have to go. Then the price of land will come down and become plentiful for those who will like to use it. Then every honest man possessing energy, even if he has no means, will be encouraged to make an honest effort to get a piece of land whereby he may employ himself, and not have to depend on somebody to buy his labor just when it suits the man who buys labor. The man that must live by selling his labor has no claim by rights on the man that buys labor. As labor is a purchasable commodity, the purchaser has the best of the deal as a rule, for the reason that he can live without the labor if he cannot get it on terms to suit him, but the man who must live by selling his labor has no choice under present conditions. He is compelled to sell his labor or starve. If he is unable to labor then he has nothing to sell and becomes a charge on charity.

lator and land monopolist will soon let go his idle land. By this means we will remove the dog from the manger and the hog from the trough, and we will then get equality in natural opportunity. Surely no man will claim that we have equality of natural opportunity under present conditions, and surely no man would deny us equality of natural opportunity, for without equality of natural opportunity we cannot have justice.

JOHN KENNEDY.

Winnipeg.

FARMERS WANT MORATORIUM

Editor, Guide:—As I am a member of the Grain Growers' Association in this district I would like to write a few lines to this paper with regard to the moratorium. I have been talking to quite a number of the farmers in this district and they are all looking forward to seeing such a measure passed in the House, which will mean a great help to them and to the country at large in another year's time. Regarding the crops, some men are writing in different papers, both in the East and West, for the farmer to grow all the wheat he can next year, but if the moratorium does not pass there will not be the grain grown that there is this year, as people are going to be put to the wall by the machine companies, mortgage companies and other concerns, and then who is going to farm this country? Is it these men who go around with white collars? No. How many of them would know how to go about farming? Or is the government going to crowd the country with foreigners, supply



FIRST PRIZE FOUR HORSE TEAM AT CALGARY INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION
Owned by D. Thornburn

Now, it is not charity we should have in such cases. It is justice we should have, and justice we never will have under the present land policy and present means of collecting taxes.

The greatest cause of war that exists is inequality of natural opportunity. Give every man equality in natural opportunity and war will vanish to a great extent, or the thoughts of war. For, after all, is it not the desire for more territory that causes nations to war? The powerful will take from the weak, and is it not so with the people. The strong financially will gobble up land and will make the weak financially pay tribute to the man who holds the land. Is it not true that such conditions should be stopped? The land by right belongs to the people, and does not by right belong to any class of people. Anything that man produces belongs to the man who produced it, but man did not produce land, and all the right any man has to land is sufficient land for his use, to the extent that the amount he desires to hold does not mean infringement on the rights of another. Therefore, cheap land means plenty of land. There is plenty of land for all and some to spare, if no man held more than was necessary for his use; but the amount he will hold under cultivation must not mean the trespassing on the rights of others. Then collect all taxes from land, that will mean a heavier tax on land, and collect no taxes from anything else, and the land specu-

lators with seed like they did before and then go around and pay big salaries for weed inspectors? I tell you the papers are telling us of the big war in Europe, but the farmers of this Western country have war the year round and quite a battle it is, and if those white collared men were in the shoes of the farmers they would not last very long. We could tell you thousands of cases that are going on around these parts of farmers losing their farms, horses, cattle and everything they have, and a good many of them who would pay all these bills if they had a show. Some have lost crops, others are hauled out and almost buried themselves, but it won't be long now I suppose.

BORDEN GRAIN GROWER.
Borden, Sask., Sept. 17, 1914.

LAND VALUE TAXATION IN SOUTH AMERICA

A reader and friend of The Guide who has for some years resided at Buenos Aires, Argentine, in reply to a request for a contribution dealing with progressive legislation in South America writes a most interesting letter, from which the following is an extract:—Editor, Guide:—As a matter of fact history is being made at too many points down here, to be capable of clear presentation to friends at a distance. Let me give you just a few items.

1. Decree of the President of the Rio

Grande de Sol Brazil liberating buildings, crops, cattle, etc., from taxes through that State.

2. The bill of the Paraguayan government doing the same over the whole of that Republic, with the addition of cumulative taxation on large estates. The bill is now in last stages of discussion. It has provoked a tremendous row among the foreign land speculating corporations interested in Paraguay.

3. The bill brought in last March by the Uruguayan government releasing buildings and improvements from the property tax and spreading said tax over unimproved land values. The Finance Committee in an admirable report has just unanimously approved of the measure. It does not affect the whole country, but only what is called the Department of Montevideo, population 500,000. But the government promises to extend the measure to the rest of the country as fast as the valuation, now proceeding, is complete in each department. I sent you a copy of the President's message introducing the bill. I have the honor of knowing the principal movers in this reform. They are out and out Single Taxers. The bill will soon become law, being a government measure. Of course the land monopolists are raising a big row, but they have no popular sympathy and are easily beaten in argument.

4. The government of Cordova (one of Argentine's important provinces) has recently decreed the valuation of the land of the province, with the exemption of buildings or anything representing the "useful inversion of capital and labor." Dr. Carcano, the governor, if not a single-taxer is very much like one. He and our Single Tax League have exchanged compliments by telegraph over our respective programs. He is probably a candidate to succeed to the presidency of the nation at the next election. An awful row is going on amongst the big land speculators.

5. We have founded here an Argentine Single Tax League, of which I sent you a circular. A strong association with some prominent, influential men at the head. Dr. Salvador Barrada, president of the National Atheneum; Dr. Rudolph Rivarola, dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the National University of La Plata; Dr. Alejandro Razo, president of the National Department of Labor; Dr. Enrique Del Valle Iberbercea, National Senator and leader of the Socialist party, whose sweeping victory at the national elections in March last was largely due to the fact of the first item in their platform being the abolition of all taxes on production and consumption, and their substitution by a progressive tax on Land Values—and a long list of other distinguished professional and business men.

We have just started a campaign which promises to be fruitful in legislation—municipal, provincial and national. The mayor of this city, Dr. Anchoveau, goes a long way with us, and brought in a bill before the local council placing a charge of £5,000,000 upon the bare land value benefitted by street widening, new parks, squares, etc. All the city paving is already a separate charge on Land Values. We propose shifting some other taxes on to the same backs.

ROBT. BALMER.
C/o The British Bank of South America, Buenos Aires, Argentine.

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