

Why Industry Lags

TAXATION is a question which is agitating the public mind to a very great extent at present. We have taxpayers' associations, taxpayers' welfare leagues, and quite a number of organizations all appointed for the purpose, if possible, of trying to get the other fellow to pay the taxes. I believe that every person who is the recipient of benefit from government expenditure should make his contribution to the cost of government. If we look at the figures of taxation, say, from the inception of Federation, we find that in this State we have been doing an exceedingly good job in extracting wealth from those who have brought it into existence. By reference to the official figures I find that in the first year of Federation the total taxation in South Australia amounted to £248,127, or 14s. 8d. per head of population. Last year we did a very much better job, and took £3,224,480, or £5 10s. 3d. per head. That shows that there is some justification on the part of taxpayers for the protests which they are issuing from time to time in regard to the burden imposed upon them. Then it is advisable to compare the growth of taxation in relation to the total production of the State. I have taken out figures for ten year periods since 1901, and this is what I have found has been happening in that time. In 1901 the total taxation levied in South Australia represented one quarter of 1 per cent of the total production. In 1911 the figure was 3.28 per cent, and in 1921 5.15 per cent. We did a very good job in 1931, and levied taxation until we took 9.31 per cent of the total production. Last year we even excelled those figures, and for 1934-5 we took 11.50 per cent. That is merely for State taxation. I have isolated the figures in regard to Federal taxation, and find that Federal taxation took 17.06 per cent from the people of this State last year. State and Federal taxation for the last financial year took out of the pockets of the people of South Australia no less than 28.56 per cent of the total wealth which their labor and capital have brought into existence. In addition there is the power of private taxation placed in the hands of certain instrumentalities, which I cannot elaborate upon this afternoon, but it is safe to say that under our present method of collecting revenue approximately 50 per cent of the total production that is brought into existence is taken today by public and private taxation. When these facts are realized one is compelled to confess it is no wonder that industry is in such a stagnant position, and that many people desirous of the opportunity to employ their labor find that none is available.

E. J. CRAIGIE in Australian Parliament

From An Early American Book

THE bulk of mankind were not only cheated out of their right to the soil, but were held ineligible to office in the government, because they were not freeholders. First cruelly to wrest from them the paternal inheritance of their universal Father, and then to make this outrageous act an excuse for denying them the rights of citizenship. This is the history of civil society in which our duty and happiness are so admirably woven together. We will however never believe, that men originally entered into a compact by which they excluded themselves from all right to the bounties of Providence, and if they had, the contract could not be binding on their posterity; for although a man may give away his own right, he cannot give away the right of another.

Merit is but an abortive, useless gift to the possessor, unless accompanied with wealth; he might choose which tree whereon to hang himself, did not his virtuous mind tell him to "dig, beg, rot and perish well content, so he but wrap himself in honest rags at his last gasp, and die in peace." It is a melancholy reflection that in almost all ages and countries, men have been cruelly butchered, for crimes

occasioned by the laws; and which they never would have committed had they not been deprived of their natural means of subsistence. But the governors of mankind seem never to have made any allowance for poverty; but like the stupid physician who prescribed bleeding for every disorder, they seem ever to have been distinguished by an amiable thirst for human blood. The altars of a merciful God, have been washed to their foundation, from the veins of miserable men; and the double edged sword of Justice, with all its formality and parade, seems calculated to cut off equally the innocent and guilty. Between religion and law, man has had literally no rest for the sole of his foot.

Society should furnish the people with means of subsistence, and those means should be an inherited quality in the nature of the government, universal, permanent and uniform, because their natural means were so. . . . In the single reign of Henry VIII, we are informed by Harrison, that seventy-two thousand thieves and rogues were hanged in England. How shall we account for this number of executions? Shall we suppose that the English nation at this period, were a pack of thieves, and that every one of this number richly deserved his fate? Or shall we say, that the lives of so many citizens were sacrificed to a wretched and barbarous policy? The latter seems to be the fact. The lands in England at this time, were held under the feudal system, in large tracts, by lords; the people were called vassals; but the conditions of their servitude were so hard, their yoke so grievous to be borne, that numbers left the service of their lords; but where could they fly? or how were they to provide for subsistence? The cultivation of the soil was denied them, except upon terms too vile and degrading to be accepted; and arts and commerce, which at this day maintain the bulk of the people, were then in their infancy, and probably employed but a small proportion of the people. We despise thieves, not caring to reflect that human nature is always the same; that when it is a man's interest to be a thief, he becomes one; but when it is his interest to support a good character, he becomes an honest man. That even thieves are honest among each other, because it is their interest to be so. We seldom hear of a man in independent circumstances being indicted for petit felony; the man would be an idiot (sic) indeed, who would stake a fair character for a few shillings, which he did not need;—but the greatest part of those indicted for petit felonies, are men who have no characters to lose, that is, no substance, which the world always takes for good character.

Is it any wonder that poverty should be such a formidable terror to civilized nations, when it never meets with quarter, but always with persecution, when both religion and law declare it to be the object of their most implacable hatred and disgust. English vagrant acts, although they are a manifest abuse of civilization, have been hitherto impregnable to the attacks of sound reason and elegant satire. Many English authors have honestly reprobated them; Mr. Fielding in several of his novels, has highly ridiculed them; and Doctor Goldsmith has exposed them in a vein of inimitable satire, in his history of a poor soldier. Pity such philosophers were not magistrates! "In vain," says Raynal, "does custom, prejudice, ignorance and hard labor stupify the lower class of mankind, so as to render them insensible of their degradation; neither religion nor morality can hinder them from seeing, and feeling, the injustice of the arrangements of policy in the distribution of good and evil."

EDITORIAL NOTE:—The foregoing are excerpts from a volume not previously known to our followers. The author had more than a glimpse of the land question and saw it in many of its implications. He seems to have had a special animus against Blackstone. In this he is somewhat vague and we do not follow him. Maybe a closer reading would make clearer the grounds of his antagonism. Mrs. Emily E. F. Skeel is responsible for the discovery of this book. It was written nearly a hundred years before "Progress and Poverty" by Robert Coram, entitled "Political Inquiries," and was published in one of our Southern States.—Editor LAND AND FREEDOM.