

## Letters From The People

### Socialist Mistakes

To the Editor of The Independent: In reply to Mr. D. W. Kennedy I wish to say that I quoted the figures from the United States census reports. Mr. Kennedy says that the census of 1900 shows 6,468,964 unemployed. He might just as well have said that the census showed most everyone idle on July 4. What are the census facts about the unemployed? Out of these 6,468,964, 3,000,000 were unemployed from one to three months, 2,500,000 from four to six months and 736,000 for more than half the year. Now what do we mean when we speak of the unemployed? We mean those who are earnestly seeking work and not finding it. This constitutes but a small fraction of the 6,500,000 unemployed in 1900. For ten years I have been investigating social conditions. I started in with all the prejudices of a socialist, for I was a member of the party and for a time blindly accepted the wild and misleading statements found in the socialist press. For instance, I fully believed that the wageworkers received only 20 per cent of what they produced, I fully believed that the middle class were being "killed" by the trusts, etc., and that there were 3,000,000 tramps and millions of unemployed. Investigations proved the awful mistakes of the socialists.

First, the census simply asks the question: "Have you been employed continuously for the past twelve months." Every clerk, every foreman, every highly paid mechanic, railroad employes, etc., etc., who has taken a month's vacation within a year must answer "no," and be so regarded. In the building trades workers and especially brick and stone masons, do not have steady work, because of weather interference and their "out-of-doors employments." They might be and probably are out of work 20 to 25 per cent of the time. But during the rush season a considerable portion of them are employed overtime and these men after all expect to loaf from two to four months each year.

In most of these trades wages are based upon this very fact. In the larger industrial cities where unsteady work is more pronounced than elsewhere, the wages in these trades will run from \$25 to \$35 a week, with double pay for overtime. Every year thousands upon thousands of employed men become unemployed because they vote to go on strike for many and various reasons, yet all these are counted among the unemployed. Then we have a large class of workers both organized and unorganized who prefer to stay only a short while in one place. The time they loaf in traveling places them in the army of "unemployed."

There are 512,623 different manufacturing plants and as many more mercantile establishments where not a week passes but some workman becomes unemployed because of a Sunday drunk.

During March and April of this year the association for improving the poor, in New York city printed cards addressed to unemployed men offering them work and financial aid, 28,000 cards being distributed to men in lodging houses, missions, "bread lines", etc., and out of the 28,000 who were unemployed and whom our socialist brothers wasted quarts of ink in sympathy over, only 305 or about one per cent responded and took work. In a charity lodging house in Philadelphia where the officials posted on bulletin boards advertisements asking for help, only about one-half of one per cent ever glanced at these bulletins. Mr. Marsh, the secretary of a society to protect children from cruelty, made a study of 118 men picked at random from unemployed. Everyone declared he was looking for work and couldn't find it. The investigation proved that 106 had given up work once or more within six months. When Mr. Marsh informed these men that he was looking for a job for them, forty-five suddenly disappeared. The rest of the men returned to the free lodging house, asserting they could find no work. Mr. Marsh disguised himself as a common worker and at the end of one day's search he had eighteen jobs.

Go into the Boston Wayfarer's lodge where the unemployed find free lodging and you will find over 1 or 2 per cent who would take a job at \$2 per day.

From 1894 to 1896 the out-of-work benefits paid by the cigarmakers' union was \$518,662 or \$6.25 annually per member. During the three years 1902, 1903 and 1904 this union paid out only \$66,501 or an annual average of 55 cents per member. Does this prove any improvement? Three years ago I made an extensive journey

through the coal regions of Pennsylvania. At the first mine I visited, Cannonsburg, Pa., an official of the union asked where John ——— was.

"Oh he's on his two week's drunk," said the foreman. Then he added: "John drew \$83 for the pay of himself and boy for two weeks' work and he went show up until that is all spent."

John is one of the unemployed, of course. I live on the main highway between the large textile city of Lawrence and Boston, a favorite route for tramps and unemployed. I have never refused but one tramp a meal. Two years ago I played a trick on these unemployed fellows and the trick consisted of having a half cord of wood in the door yard. Well sir, the hungry unemployed failed to call while the wood remained un-sawed. Only one came to the door in six months and he was O. K. He got the job to saw the wood and was paid, and he had a steady job inside of three days.

A thousand like illustrations could be made. There are a few, perhaps 10 per cent of the 6,500,000 unemployed (in 1900,) who are unemployed through no fault of their own, but an investigation will show that 90 per cent of the unemployed are idle for vicious habits, from strikes, from downright laziness, from roving dispositions, and other causes with which the competitive system has nothing to do.

The fact that 52.2 per cent hired homes in 1890 and 53.5 per cent in 1900 proves nothing of the real condition of wealth ownership or concentration. How much gain was there in savings bank deposits and depositors? How large an increase in the number of business firms, how large an increase in life insurance policies and how large an increase in stockholders in railroad and industrial companies? Tell us this Brother Kennedy and then you will know considerable more about the distribution of wealth. And lastly what is meant by "working class families" owning only 10.6 per cent of their homes? Do you mean only wage-hands or what?

Socialism stands for confiscation, pure and simple. It has failed wherever its been tried on a small basis. Every political economist all over the world, with just one exception, opposes socialism, and so does nearly everyone else who investigates it. Moreover, the tactics of both the socialist parties are so rotten that it is almost beyond relief, how a self-respecting man can have anything to do with the red-flag crowd.

F. G. R. GORDON.

### More Light For Ligan

Lewisburg, Tenn., Nov. 9.—To the Editor of The Independent: I see in your issue of November 2, that Brother G. Ligan thinks I did not give a direct answer to his question. He says he said nothing about "land factories," etc. In saying that "there are no land factories," I did not intend to presume upon the ignorance of any one. Of course, everybody knows there are none; but that is a direct answer to his question. I could not answer his question without some such expression to show that inasmuch as land is not a product of men's labor and that labor products are, a tax upon the former up to the rent line exclusive of improvements—labor products—cannot possibly be shifted to tenants or to consumers, ultimately to producers. While a tax upon the latter is inevitably shifted to consumers, ultimately to producers; because men cannot afford to engage in production at a loss. I used the word, consumers, instead of producers because the connection is more direct and it is more obvious that taxation is shifted to consumers; though, of course, non-producers recoup themselves in other ways upon producers, so that the burden rests ultimately upon producers. I made no mention of these matters in my former letter in order to avoid wobbling on the spool as much as possible.

Mr. Ligan asks in substance, how can we prevent the manufacturer, A, and the wholesale merchant, B, and the retailer, C, from shifting the ground rent tax to consumers, the non-producers who recoup themselves upon the producers? We do not have to take any measure to prevent it. Ground rent is of such a nature that a tax put upon it will "stay put." There is no possibility of its being shifted. However, in my former letter, I did make some slips which Mr. Pleydell of Philadelphia subsequently corrected, for which I here tender thanks.

Mr. Ligan admits that the single tax "might make the big landholders turn loose their holdings when they were not in a good state of cultivation. But if they were in good state of cul-

tivation and good land, they would saddle the rent on the poor tenant." Now, could they? If it makes the big landholders turn loose their holdings, then can't the poor tenants begin to go onto the land which is turned loose by paying its yearly value to the state and having no other taxes to pay and thereby prevent the large holder of well improved land from shifting the rent upon them? Now, of course, the value of the improvements could be shifted to the tenants, because the tenants would as soon pay for the use of the landlord's improvements as to make improvements of their own on the land that would be turned loose, provided the landlord would not ask more for the use of his improvements than they were worth. If he did that, the tenant could improve for himself, on the unimproved land which the single tax would cause to be turned loose.

And did you ever think of how much land is being held out of use just because it is profitable to own land without using it and because taxes are increased on it as soon as it is improved.

Now, the single tax would not break up large holdings of improved land. But why should we wish to break them up. The large landholder or the rich man cannot use more land than the poor man without employing laborers, and when the laborers can have access to the land which the single tax would cause to be turned loose, they will not accept smaller wages than they can make working on their own land. This would have such an effect on wages that laborers could soon avail themselves of the best machinery, and labor-saving inventions would then rebound to the benefit of laborers instead of to landowners as now.

Mr. Ligan seems to have only farming land in view. The agricultural land that would be set free by the single tax is the least important of all the lands that would be set free, since agricultural lands comprise less than 10 per cent of the total land values of the United States.

But I feel that I should not take more of The Independent's space in this article.

W. E. ALEXANDER.

### Wants Democracy Explained

Pittsburg, Pa., Nov. 10.—To the Editor of The Independent: I would like to have some of your readers explain just what democracy is. There are many people who assert nowadays that a monarchy is better than a republic. I see that The Independent believes with De Toqueville that "the cure for democracy is more democracy." But those who favor an aristocratic form of government seem to have some pretty strong arguments. Would not aristocracy solve the negro question in this country? Can anyone dispute that democracy and the denial of equal rights to the negro are incompatible? If we had a monarchy in this country the southern people could frankly admit that class distinctions are the natural order of affairs and could align the various classes according to some benevolent system. At the present time, however, the southern people cling to democracy and yet deny to negroes equal rights. I wish some of our southern friends who are democrats would explain this puzzle. I don't wish to enter into a controversy, but simply desire light. A discussion of the question can do no harm.

I see that The Independent demands the removal of all special privileges. But that would mean in the south the withdrawal from the white people of all the special privileges that they claim over the negroes. Has not the Creator Himself granted special privileges, such as health, superior mental endowments, color, etc. Has he not thereby given His sanction to class distinctions? And if He has given such a sanction, what foundation is there for democracy? Is not government based on divine right sanctioned? I do not mean by this that a monarch becomes king by the grace of God, but I mean to suggest that the natural order provides for distinctions in races, classes and individuals that seem to justify the aristocratic as opposed to the democratic system. Will your readers kindly try their hand at giving me a solution?

HERBERT BANCROFT.

### State Should Not Turn Grafter

Fremont, Neb., Oct. 25.—To the Editor of The Independent: I see quite an agitation in regard to suppressing the pass, graft of all state officers, which is the right thing to do. One man proposed that the state pay their fare. I say, no. Do not let the state turn grafter. All the representatives and senators get all they deserve and more accordingly than all other workmen get, so I say more than they deserve for running the state in debt, and making taxes almost beyond many a man's ability to pay.

M. A. GOODRICH.