

Other items of necessities, such as meat, bacon, eggs, coal, firewood, &c., have also risen in price considerably, and have helped to minimise any advance in workers' wages. These, however, are more defensible in their deductions than unfair rentals, because some part of the profits made in such cases goes to producers. Unfortunately for the operative or labourer, he is seldom the owner of the means of production, and the point he is made to realise is that mutton is far more costly than it was ten years ago, while the increased cheques for frozen meat, freights, commissions, &c., do not come his way. Nevertheless, a certain number of his class are employed in the production or distribution of meat, and therefore advances in its price do not stand on the same footing as those of ground-rents. Even the farmers indirectly suffer by such mulcting of wages, for less farm-produce is consumed when the spending-power of the masses is checked, and directed aside into private banking accounts of the owners of city and suburban lands.

With the above considerations in mind, I very earnestly ask the Government to take into consideration the question of legislating for the acquirement of suburban lands and the housing of the citizens. Whether such consideration should take the direction of State or municipal control of compulsorily acquired properties I do not presume to suggest. Some scheme, however, should be earnestly pondered over having for its determination the breaking-up of the land ring. Just as Russia acquired by an Imperial ukase possession of petroleum-wells at Baku, and so controlled the market in order to prevent the cupidity of individuals destroying the transport service, &c., of the Empire (carried on by oil-burning steamers), so in New Zealand there is reason for the State to interfere to prevent the exploitation of its citizens and the draining of the earnings of the community into the possession of a few private persons.

It is beyond doubt that the advantages bestowed by progressive legislation are gradually being nullified, and will eventually be destroyed by certain adverse influences. Those influences must be sought out and neutralised fearlessly and effectively in the interests of all classes of workers—*i.e.*, of the vast majority of the citizens of the colony.

To the Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon, Minister of Labour.

EDW. TREGGAR,
Secretary for Labour.

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