

of the privileged minority. In economics and politics alike you cannot serve two masters or ride two horses. You cannot be for the people and for the property interests. You cannot pay Paul, in any currency worth having, except by borrowing from Peter; and in this case Paul is the average man and Peter is the rich man, and the sooner we face this fact the easier it will be for everybody.

The average citizen, I mean the man who needs reforms but does not talk much about them, has developed a distinct genius for telling the difference between a man who is trying to do something useful and a man who is talking through his hat.

And speaking somewhat personally, it seems to me that life is too short and human strength too transient to continue playing around the edge of real things and merely flirting with fundamentals. We all get old or tired before the day's work is done. So why not say what we want to say, and make the fight for the things we believe in before Time has made old men of us, obstructing and protesting, as most of us probably will, against the progress of younger generations?

I am perfectly well aware that if we make real things the fighting issues of our campaign—cheaper necessities of existence, transportation, communication, light, heat and power and rents—we will array against us a majority of the wealthy and respectable citizens of New York, whom we have been taught to regard as the high priests of civic virtues, and who stand for privilege and preferred rights. We will have the solid opposition of the real estate interests, who are now so ably represented in the ranks of fusion. We will, of course, have Tammany against us. We will have the money power against us and many of the newspapers. In fact, we will have practically everybody but the people against us. But whether we win or lose, we will at least know that we have stood for what was sound and right and what must inevitably come in the future; that we have for once refused to "nail our banner to the fence;" that we have struck a real blow to relieve the average man from extortion and oppression; that we have at last attacked the source and stronghold of Tammany's power; that we have won for ourselves the confidence and respect of the majority, and that we have begun the fight along the lines that are certain to win. AMOS PINCHOT.

BASED ON HONESTY

I am a radical in taxation for I believe in Single Tax as the only system which is based on honesty and not robbery and crooked reasoning.—DR. FRANK CRANE.

THE distinguished scientist, Mme. Curie, who is paying us the honor of a visit, announces that she cannot understand the difference between Democrat and Republican in our political party divisions. She evidently has the true scientific mind. But she would make a poor citizen. For every four years every man and woman in the nation is expected to get wildly excited over the difference.

What the Single Tax Would Do

(From an address by J. W. Bengough, Toronto.)

AFTER dealing with the fiscal aspect of the question and showing that as a reform in taxation the Single Tax system would be superior in simplicity, practicability, economy and morality, Mr. Bengough proceeded as follows:

It is not, however, the consideration that the Single Tax would be an immense improvement upon the present system—that it would be the nearest conceivable approach to perfection as a reform in our municipal methods, that makes the Single Taxer an enthusiast. Nor is it this consideration which has brought back into the Christian ranks many who, in perplexity and despair, had thrown off the teaching of their youth in the presence of the black and lowering problems of our day, for which the Church seemed to have no practical solution, and in which indeed it seemed to have very little practical interest. It was when the ethical significance of this apparently simple reform in the taxation system dawned upon the minds of these anxious lovers of their race that they recognized the Single Tax as a newly revealed truth of God, and the necessary complement of the Gospel of Christ. And I have no doubt it is the ethical side of it that will appeal most strongly to you.

I address especially those of you who are preachers of Christ's Gospel. So far as that Gospel has to do with things of the present world, your hearts are often heavy no doubt when you see how very slowly the Kingdom advances. Notwithstanding all your labor, I know that you are prepared for the obstacle of man's depravity by nature, but every minister who looks beyond the individual to the environment in which that individual moves, must see plainly that there are institutions in our social system which vastly reinforce the natural depravity of man, and militate against the Christian virtues. Man's proneness to strong drink, for example, was evidenced even in Noah's day. How much harder is the fight against that weakness in the presence of the modern saloon—an institution which until lately was as legitimate in our communities as a schoolhouse or a church?

Perhaps the very root of man's depravity is selfishness. And yet how many of our laws and institutions put an enormous premium on this vice! We cry, let the Gospel have free course and be glorified, but it cannot have free course with these man-made and man-supported obstacles across its path. You, as preachers, call upon men to love one another; to prefer others to self; to live out the Golden Rule. I believe the average man would like to obey your injunction, and if nothing stood in his way but his own natural selfishness he would do it in some good measure. But his natural selfishness is buttressed and inflamed by the whole social system in which he stands. Greed, grasp, get, these are the watchwords of the civilization all about

him. "Business is Business"—but unselfish generosity: the preferring of one's neighbors to one's self in matters of practical everyday concern, the literal forgiving of the debtor who cannot pay you—these, our cynical civilization pronounces quixotic, and under the conditions which we have allowed to grow up around us, we even find ourselves giving tacit consent to the impious apology that Christ's doctrine of brotherly love is an impracticable dream.

Now, I don't hesitate to say that the most formidable obstacle in the way of Christ's Gospel—the most potent shield for human selfishness—is the system of private speculation in land—the thing which the Single Tax would destroy. I need not tell this audience that nothing can be more utterly fatal to the growth of the Spirit of Christ among men and the growth of the beautiful virtues which adorn the Christian character, than the lust of gold, the desire for riches, the feverish anxiety to get wealth quickly and for the least possible expenditure of labor.

Now, there are three short cuts to riches without the rendering of value for value—short cuts which it would be in the interests of human happiness and well-being to have barred up, viz.:

1. The ownership of land, in which God has stored coal or oil or metal, or which will yield abundant rent, or as it is called by the economists, unearned increment.
2. Special privileges in the ownership of public franchises such as railways, telegraphs, telephones, electric lights, gas, etc., or in the form of tariff legislation favoring the establishment of trusts, pools and combines.
3. Gambling—either in the vulgar literal sense, or in the more wholesale though equally immoral form of speculation on the stock exchange.

Only one other short cut to wealth without labor need be named, and that is plain stealing. Across this path we have the bars of law, and it is not considered a respectable path of life. Yet I do not think Christ would recognize any moral distinction between them, nor am I aware that he has authorized human governments to make the first three species of robbery legal by Act of Parliament.

Now, I want to read first here a few solemn words from the pen of Mr. Flower, once editor of the *Arena*:

"Unless early and radical social and economic reforms are brought about, all hope of a moral reformation will be illusive, because present conditions are day by day deadening ethical sensibilities. Moreover, he who knows anything about the power of wealth concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who have acquired it chiefly through unearned increment, special privileges or gambling, knows full well that it will steadily encroach upon the earnings of industry until the wealth producers will be absolute serfs in all but name, while any hope for elevation of morals from those who have deadened their consciences in the mad struggle for gold, will be vain."

There is little use in preaching to people who have deadened their consciences, and if men are to be salvable by the Gospel of Christ this process of conscience-deadening

must be stopped. But how? "By early and radical social and economic reforms" as Mr. Flower indicates—by these supplementing the earnest prayers and appeals to God and to men from the Christian pulpit.

And what social and economic reforms shall we have?

Well, first—because nearest at hand, and simple and practicable—the Single Tax. For at one stroke this measure will absolutely abolish these first two forms of thievery, and seriously cripple if not destroy the third.

I think it is easy to see how this simple change in the tax system would accomplish the vast results of actually realizing the radical reforms which, as Mr. Flower says, are necessary to the salvation of our civilization.

I. By extinguishing the speculative element in land ownership (which would be accomplished when the unearned increment was taken for public uses) an end would be put to landed plutocracy. It would no longer be possible for any man or family to live in luxury and idleness on land rent. There would be an end of millionaire landlords.

II. The vast monopolies, such as the coal companies, oil companies, and others which are based upon the ownership of land would be broken up because, with their land holdings taxed at their full actual value instead of at the nominal rate which now obtains, it would be impossible for them to hold these great natural reservoirs, or if they did continue to hold them, at least the public would get a fair equivalent. There would consequently be no more millionaire oil barons and coal kings.

III. The Single Tax system also includes the governmental or municipal control of all public franchises, these being the creation of the community and therefore the rightful property of the people as a whole. But, short of taking over the railways, for example, into government management, the Single Tax, by taking for public use the annual rental value of the road allowances, station grounds, yards and sidings, and all other land owned by the railroad companies, would compel something like a fair equivalent for the monopolies as they now exist and there would be no more millionaires of the Rockefeller variety.

IV. As to those plutocrats whose riches arise from the manipulation of stocks and bonds, they would be shorn of most of their power by the Single Tax, because most of the securities, so-called, in which they deal are, in the last analysis, based on landlordism.

The Single Tax, I repeat, would absolutely extinguish landlordism, and so long as landlordism remains there can be no radical solution of the other pressing problems of the day.

The fundamental error and wrong of our social system is the mistake which our forefathers made and in which we persist, viz.: the treating of the earth as a commodity of private ownership and speculation. Under the system which now exists it would be permissible and legal for one man to own the world. And I say, in the presence of that man and his legal rights all attempts to cure the

horrible evils of society which are patent to all would be utterly futile.

Take the great matter of tenement house reform in New York. There, as you know, in the tenement districts are vast bogs of misery and pollution, a scandal to Christian civilization and a heart-sore to all lovers of the human race. These terrible morasses are the fungus growth of landlordism. The land rent is so enormous in the lower sections of New York that wretched tenements crowded by squalid human creatures is the natural result. Earnest philanthropic men of that city have set themselves to the task of curing this crying evil, and the practical proposition to this end is rapid transit and decent dwellings for the poor in the suburbs of the metropolis. That ought to cure the slums, one would say, and New York is able to provide the funds for securing the rapid transit. But Dr. Felix Adler, though not a Single Taxer, saw the lion in the path. Some time ago he said:

"Rapid transit is suggested as the solution of the tenement house problem. Rapid transit and bridges would open up the suburbs, but this would result in capitalists and syndicates buying up the land and holding it for an advance in values. It would result in new landlord families that make the aristocracy of New York today, whose fathers and grandfathers were shrewd enough to buy up New York and year after year they are levying tribute upon us."

It is the same with every other attempted reform—every other plan for bettering the condition of mankind—every other project having in view the closing up of this awful gulf which is yawning wider and wider between the classes and the masses.

Everything rolls at last into the landlord's lap.

Take Free Trade. Why has not that great measure proved a radical and lasting cure for the ills of Great Britain? Why, after all these years since the abolition of the Corn laws, do we hear of Darkest England and the horrors of British slums? Because landlordism was not abolished with the Corn laws. If a Duke *owns* the East End of London what can the labors of a Booth do beyond affording some temporary help to some of its wretched denizens?

In the days of the Pilgrim Fathers they had neither paupers nor millionaires in the States. How comes it that a country capable, as is estimated, of supporting a population of 1000 millions is overcrowded with 100 millions? Has the country shrunk? No, but landlordism now has its barbed wire fences around most of it. Men were comfortable and safe so long as they had access to land freely within the bounds of civilization, as they had in the days of the Pilgrims, and for a good many years afterwards.

You as ministers are in the front rank of the fighters against war and drink and crime. God prosper your labors! But so far as any radical abolition of these evils is concerned, what is the use of your efforts? You tell your people that God will never answer the man who prays for a crop, if that man does not plow and sow. You are right, and I tell you that God will never grant your prayers that the

armies of the world may be disbanded, and that the prisons may be unoccupied, until you have first cleared away that man-made obstacle to God's glory on the earth: landlordism.

Peace—glorious prospect! Suppose your efforts are successful and you see the armies of the world disbanded: what of the millions added to the ranks of the workers who are already seeking work in vain? Simply an aggravation of the present difficulties, *but* infallibly an increase in the value of land, and more wealth poured into the landlord's lap.

Temperance Reform—noble ambition! Abolition of Crime and Prisons—grand prospect! But if the drunk and incapable became sober and capable, if the army of prisoners is reformed and liberated, and all are ready and willing to work—then what? A still further aggravation of the present problems, but again inevitably a rise in the value of land, and more wealth pours into the lap of the landlord. Can you question that such would be the outcome? Not if you consent to the statement that increase of population raises the value of land.

It does this because land is a thing which is limited in quantity and cannot be increased by man, though it may be and is diminished by landlordism. And this is the point I want to concentrate your attention upon—that Land differs radically from all else that may rightfully be *owned* and *speculated* in by man. When once the line of demarcation is drawn in your minds between Nature and the works of man in so far as ownership is concerned, the whole philosophy of the Single Tax will, I think, be indicated for you. We do not realize the monstrosity of the private monopoly of land for two reasons:

(1.) We have been brought up in the midst of the prevailing system. If we had been born and raised in a community in which air was similarly dealt with, or sunlight, or water, we would probably have been just as slow to question the righteousness of such a system, or to recognize in it the root of vast social difficulties.

(2.) For purposes of civilization it is absolutely necessary that land should be held in private possession, and we have failed to discriminate between the ownership of land and the ownership of land rent, a distinction which represents the difference between the land-user and the land-speculator—between the useful bee and the harmful beetle.

As I say, my great hope is to make clear to you the utter wrongfulness of the private ownership of land rent as we now have it, and to get you to recognize the radical distinction between land and labor products as articles of speculation. Land, air, sunshine, water—these are all natural elements, the direct gift of God, and each is essential to the very life of man. There is no argument in favor of the monopoly of land, that will not equally justify similar ownership of air, sunshine and water. They are all in the one category. Herbert Spencer has declared (Social Statics, Chap. 9), that equity does not countenance private ownership of land as it now obtains. He says in

effect that if we grant the rightfulness of one acre being held absolutely as the property of one individual of the race, we must grant the rightfulness of one man owning any number of acres, or the whole planet, and we must assent that the rest of the human family have no claim to a standing place except by his suffrage. Now Single Taxers say that the evil element in monopoly is the absence of an equivalent rendered by the holder of such monopoly. They have no objection to one man owning an acre of land, or any number of acres, *providing he gives an equivalent* for this ownership to the rest of mankind, and the only equivalent is that which the Single Tax would secure, viz.: the annual rental value. The size of the holding matters nothing, the principle remains the same, and whether it be an acre, a township or a continent, the amount of the annual rental value is the only true equivalent that can be given for its private possession and ownership; for

(a) A lump sum paid to another individual is no equivalent to the community.

(b) A lump sum paid to the State is no equivalent to the generation next to be born.

The annual rental value, perpetually rendered up, meets all the conditions of justice. It is not needful that all men should hold land, though all are equally entitled to its ownership. If all, as citizens of the State, share the revenue provided from the rental value, then just rights are vindicated. And on the other hand, the man who holds and enjoys the land, being asked to pay only the fairly estimated value of his opportunity, while the results of his personal labor are left entirely untaxed, is also dealt with on a basis of strict justice.

I think it well to emphasize the distinction between ownership and possession. Absolute ownership can only attach to those things which man can by his own powers either create or control in supply. A man may absolutely own a hat or coat because he can make such things, or trace a clear title back to the maker. He may own a house because he has power to control the supply of houses, either increasing or diminishing the same. But he can neither make nor increase nor diminish land, air or sunshine; nor can any individual secure a private title to any of these which he can trace back to the maker. Herbert Spencer says that a search into the land titles would show that the original deeds were written with swords instead of pens and in blood rather than ink—that they had their origin in the brute triumph of the strong over the weak.

God never made the earth to be held as a mere revenue-producing property for idlers. He made it for the use of Man. Single Taxers therefore demand the equivalent from all who hold the earth, whether they are idlers or workers. Under the present system absolute ownership, without anything like full equivalent, is supported by our laws, and to take the place of the righteous equivalent the present system makes up its revenues by unrighteously taxing the products of labor.

A Prevalent Misconception*

IF one is correct in assuming this old cry of "Back to the land" to be the philosophy of this remarkable novel, one can easily go further and assume that Hamsun is not unfavorably disposed to Henry George's philosophy. The government had no interest in this wild barren tract until Isak had built it up into something of value, and then there came down upon him the Lensmand—"Sheriff's officer in charge of a small district," explains the translator. Isak must pay for it now. In his conversation with the Lensmand, who is a fine fellow and by no means unfriendly to him, he discovers that he must pay a much higher rate than he would have had to pay if he had not improved the land so as to make it valuable and attract other settlers in the future. He is fined for giving the government something of value. This bit of satire could have come from no pen except one well disposed to the doctrine of Henry George.—*N. Y. Times*.

Not for the purpose of advertising Knut Hamsun's powerful novel do we reprint the foregoing extract from the Book-Review of the *New York Times*, but because it will illustrate to our readers one of the most prevalent misconceptions of the purpose of the Single Tax movement. Too many people are unable to distinguish between a movement organized to return the land to the people and one to return the people to the land. That it is possible to return the people, or a great part of them to the land without returning the land to them ought to be too clear to need emphasis. But alas! it is not. Foggy thinking and misunderstanding of language, plain enough in itself, is the cause of much human misery. How often is the answer given to advocates of the Single Tax "I don't want to be a farmer!"

Civilization is just as apt to suffer when there are more farmers than are necessary to produce the food supply as when there are too many mechanics to do the mechanical labor necessary for the facilitation of labor. What is really needed is the proper equilibrium between avocations which can only be attained in communities whose members are free to direct their energies to those forms of production which give them the greatest satisfaction in goods or in spirit. Such a condition can never exist where some are permitted to own what they cannot use while others must use what they can never own.

At this point I will doubtless meet the criticism of those, who deprecate the use of the word "own" when applied to land. This criticism opens up another question, which in my judgment has been a tremendous barrier to the spread of the Single Tax idea, the belief that the Single Tax philosophy denies the right of any man to own land. We know that Henry George directly states that ownership of land by individuals has no foundation in ethics and there is no denying this doctrine if we base all right to property in production.

To the man on the street ownership means right of exclusive possession and power to give or bequeath, subject to such regulations as the community may impose. Hardly

* GROWTH OF THE SOIL. Translated from the Norwegian of Knut Hamsun by W. H. Worster. Two volumes, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.