

but in part only, what Mr. Aitken terms "the terrible spectre of confiscation," of which our interested opponents make such good use, and which he evidently regards as the chief obstacle to the general acceptance of our proposals and of Henry George's teachings. I for one do not believe this. In any case I would remind Mr. Aitken, and those who agree with him, that the buying up of the whole land of the country is so far removed from the field of practical politics as to justify practical men in classing it amongst impracticable, unrealizable ideals. And manifestly our cause must necessarily suffer if we allow it to be associated in the public mind with any such scheme. On the other hand, thanks to the unceasing efforts of Single Taxers to-day in America, Australia and even in conservative Great Britain, the taxation of land values, the first direct step toward the Single Tax, is well within the field of practical politics, and is daily gaining fresh friends and increased support. True, there is much work yet to be done, many spectres yet to be laid to rest, many real difficulties yet to be overcome. But I, for one, have no doubt but that we should only injure our cause and render our work unnecessarily difficult by coquetting with or advocating any unnecessary, unjust and utterly misleading compensation proposals. And hence, that we should do well unswervingly to persevere along the lines laid down for our guidance by our great master, which have already enabled us powerfully to influence, if not to dominate, the progressive thought of the world.

LONDON, Eng.

By Dr. EDWARD D. BURLEIGH.

Mr Peter Aitken's article on "The Chief Obstacle to the Single Tax and how to Remove it," is curious reading. He plainly sees that landlords have no moral right to "rent," never did have, never could have; that "rent" is rightfully the property of the whole people; that a man's earnings are his own and cannot rightfully be taken from him; and yet he writes a big article to advocate robbing the worker, under the forms of law, to pay "compensation" to landlords for the loss of something they never had any right to, and have been wrongfully appropriating for some hundreds of years. It would seem as if the "compensation," if any, should go in the other direction. Really it is almost impossible to treat the article seriously, especially in view of the fact that, as Mr. Aitken confessed in conversation, the time could never come when compensation could be even claimed, much less granted.

If Single Taxers proposed to "nationalize" the land, to abolish all private titles and let it out in lots to suit, then the question would undoubtedly come up, and claims for compensation would be made by those whose land was taken. But Single Taxers do not propose to nationalize land. They propose to abolish all other taxes and levy a "Single Tax" on the rental value of land. They propose to leave the *form* of land ownership just as it is now; to take away no landlord's land, but merely to require him to pay a tax on it equal to its annual rental value. Every landlord holds his land subject to such taxes as the State may levy on it. Whether the Single Tax were introduced suddenly, as we should like it to be, or gradually, as it is likely to be, there could never come a time when anyone would even think of asking, or paying, "compensation." How could the question ever come up?

Mr. Aitken is anxious, as we all are, to get people to listen to our proposal, and, to do it, he seems to propose a "bunco" game on them, to make them think that the landlords are to be compensated for the loss of their present privilege of appropriating the public property, when he has no idea of ever doing it. And he seems to think that such a scheme would remove "the chief obstacle to the Single Tax."

What does he take the people for? How long would it take the gentlemen he names, or even the common run of ordinary people, to find out the truth of the matter? And what could he expect them, then, to think of those who had tried to deceive them? And how much would such a course be likely to advance the cause?

Let us rather follow the example of Henry George, and say boldly just what we mean. Let us show the people, as fast as we can, that private *property* in land is *wrong*, and why; that private *possession* of land is *right*, and why; that we propose to end the former as soon as we can and perpetuate the latter, and to place it upon a firm, impregnable foundation of right and justice, instead of the quagmire of injustice it now legally rests upon. Let us show them that we respect "the sacred right of property," and would not attempt to appropriate a cent for any public use, outside of the rightful property of the public, the "rent" of land. Doing this we shall occupy a strong position, one that cannot be successfully assailed, and we shall eventually win, as surely as truth is destined to prevail over error and right over wrong. I cannot see that we have anything to gain in the long run by misrepresenting or beclouding our position.

Mr. Aitken says; "And however we may disguise it, what we want is simply to impose taxation so as to take land out of the control of private owners and throw it open to whoever will make the best use of it; in the words of Henry George, to make land common property." We wish to do this in *fact*, not in *form*, and as we are *not* going to do it in form, it does not seem clear how or when we could compensate, or what we could compensate for.

Mr. Aitken says that our refusal to compensate "of course arouses opposition not only from landlords, but at first from every man of *common* honesty, and this opposition is what I conceive to be the chief obstacle to our cause." This arouses opposition from landlords, as a rule, "of course," but not "of course" from "every man of common honesty." Some men of "common honesty" get a wrong idea of what we propose and will not investigate or listen to explanations, but most men will listen, sooner or later, and can then be shown what we really propose. Even some landlords have been converted to a belief in the Single Tax, and many more, no doubt, will be. Mr. George says, somewhere, that he appeals to them with as much confidence as to any other class. And why not? They would lose their privileges, it is true, but they would gain what would much more than make up the loss to them.

Mr. Aitken says that the benefit landlords would receive, as their share of the common benefit, "cannot logically be called compensation for the special privilege they now possess." And why not? Why do they value their present privilege? Is it not because they suppose that it increases their happiness? If it could be proved to them, as it *would* be, that the adoption of the Single Tax would increase their happiness, notwithstanding it destroys their privilege, would they not feel that their loss was more than made up to them, that they were compensated? And what other compensation would be right? It certainly cannot be contended that it would be right to continue their privilege in another form. If the people are ever to be relieved of the burden of the landlord's privilege, the privilege must be abolished, not changed in form only. Why postpone the time of its abolition by giving the landlord the privilege in another form for a time? If it is not to last forever he must relinquish it sometime. Is he likely to be any more ready later on?

Further on Mr. Aitken says: "For not only are our doctrines imperfect, measured by the ideal, we are not even the most advanced exponents of practical justice. The socialist doctrine: 'From every man according to his ability, to each according to his needs,' is a much higher expression of the sense of justice

than the doctrine of the equal right to the use of the earth. Nevertheless we quite honestly reject it because we do not consider it practicable."

Does Mr. Aitken mean to say that a thing may be "right in theory but will not work in practice?" So far from the "Socialist doctrine" which he quotes, being "a much higher expression of justice than the doctrine of the equal rights to the use of the earth," it is no expression of justice at all, high or low, while the other *is*. Every person is equally entitled to life. The use of the earth is essential to life; *therefore* all are *equally* entitled to use it. When, for any reason, no matter what, the right to use any particular piece of land acquires a value (that is, will yield rent) that value belongs of right to all the people.

Each person has, of right, an exclusive claim to himself and consequently to all his faculties and the entire product of his exertion, except if he uses better land than all can freely get, when he owes society so much of his product as equals the rent of such land, but *no more*. All the rest of his product belongs exclusively to him because he has an exclusive claim to himself and an equal right with all others to use the earth. Therefore, all taxes, except the land value tax, as well as all fines, or pecuniary penalties of whatever kind, are robbery, and should be abolished, leaving the land value tax as the only tax, the *Single Tax*. But what claim has one man on the earnings of another? None whatever. The world owes no man a living; it owes every one an equal chance to make a living. This is why the socialist doctrine should be rejected; not because it is not practicable. In fact this is why it is not practicable, because it is not just.

Mr. Aitken, speaking of certain prominent and influential men who are supposed to be "almost persuaded," says: "Shall we send them away sorrowful because of their great possessions, by insisting upon their unconditional surrender, or shall we follow the Apostle's example and be all things to all men, if by any means we may win some?"

What is the meaning of this? Mr. Aitken certainly cannot want Single Taxers to resort to double dealing and misrepresentation to win certain people to what they would mistakenly suppose to be our cause, only to find out later that they had been imposed upon. And what would be the good of such converts thus made? A supposed convert to the Single Tax who did not see that private land owning (that is, the private appropriation of rent) was wrong, would be a very poor Single Taxer. His advocacy would hardly help the cause; it would be more likely to hurt it. We want people to listen to us; we want to make converts; but we do *not* want *supposed* converts who have been induced to listen and accept our teaching by means of wilful misrepresentation on our part. What else would it be to put forward such a scheme of compensation as Mr. Aitken proposes we should, when we knew and intended, all the time, that there could never come a time when it could be put in practice? Of course, Mr. Aitken does not *mean* to "bunco" people with a "gold brick," but what else does his plan amount to?

Really, the example of "the apostle" and the early Christian church, does not seem to me very encouraging. If, following that example would result in a nominal triumph of the Single Tax, with such a change in its character from its pristine purity as Christianity suffered, I think we had better not follow it, but go a little more slowly, if necessary, and preserve its character. The Single Tax, changed as much from what Henry George advocated, as Christianity has been changed from what Jesus taught, would be of very little use. Incidentally, it might be mentioned, in this connection, that Jesus let the rich young man go away sorrowful.

After quoting a Single Taxer as saying, "any one who confesses himself a disciple of Henry George and at the same time a believer in compensation,

confesses himself a fool," and Carlyle as saying that the British were mostly fools, Mr. Aitken says: "But we are all fools, and I don't know but the kind of fool who fails to welcome the co-operation of another fool in the work of liberating humanity, simply because the other fool believes in compensation, is the worst." There might be more force in this remark if "compensation" did not mean continuing the enslavement in another form. How can we welcome the aid of any one "in the work of liberating humanity" who insists on keeping humanity enslaved?

Mr. Aitken makes a long argument to prove that most people are reluctant to abolish any evil if its abolition involves any destruction of legal property-rights, no matter how unjust; but he makes it no more clear than Henry George does in his books, and yet George opposed compensation, notwithstanding. Why should we do otherwise?

Again, Mr. Aitken, after speaking of different ways of meeting proposals to compensate, says: "A much more effective method is to absolutely reject on high moral grounds any and all proposals to compensate landlords. * * * But who among us can hope to rival Henry George's final and crushing broadsides on this phase of the question? And if he has not convinced many, even of those in sympathy with his aims and character, how can we hope to succeed where he has failed? Who says he has failed? The end is not yet. Let us continue to proclaim the truth he uttered. It must win at last."

Mr. Aitken alludes to the abolition of slavery in the British colonies, and says: "Paying price for instant freedom was less repugnant to the sense of justice than prolonging the slavery even temporarily and in a modified form." He overlooks the fact that "paying price" *was* "prolonging the slavery," and "a modified form." It partially enslaved the people from whom the money was taken that was paid to the former slaveholders.

No one doubts that the proposal to abolish, without compensation, the privilege of land owning (that is, without continuing the privilege in some other form) is an obstacle to the acceptance of the Single Tax doctrines by many; but so is the proposal to abolish the protective tariff and the tariff for revenue. Shall we, therefore, advocate continuing them, to conciliate those who believe in them?

In suggesting a means to compensate landlords, Mr. Aitken seems to use the word "wages" in a very restricted sense, as including only money received from an employer, whereas, as used in "Progress and Poverty," and economic discussions generally (except by Socialists), it is used to mean all returns for labor, whether received direct from nature, or through the hands of an employer. If it were attempted to levy his proposed tax on *all* wages, how could it be done; if only on money paid by an employer, where would be the justice? Why should employees only contribute from their wages to compensate landlords, and not also those who work for themselves?

Mr. Aitken claims that the gradual establishment of the Single Tax would be virtual compensation, and therefore to advocate it is no better than to propose robbing workers to pay landlords for the loss of their privilege to rob them. But there is this difference: in the former case we accept the inevitable, if it shall prove to be inevitable, but work steadily and persistently for abolition at the earliest possible moment; while in the latter we assume immediate success to be impossible, and deliberately adopt a course which would make it so.

Single Taxers have met many discouragements, but not more than Henry George anticipated in "Progress and Poverty;" and when we look at the state of public opinion to-day, not only in this country but in England, Germany, New Zealand and Australia, and compare it with what existed when that immortal book was first published, we have great cause for encouragement. It is no time to conclude that our efforts have been in vain.

Let us take courage, then, and go forward, resolved to continue the crusade till the promised "land" is won and all men are at last free.

EDWARD D. BURLEIGH.

By SAMUEL MILLIKEN.

I disapprove in toto Mr. Aitken's proposal to preach a partial or complete compensation to landlords. I am not one of those who are incensed by his statement that our radical programme arouses opposition "at first from every man of *common* honesty." Let it be so—the fact remains, nevertheless, that "common" honesty is not honesty, but like "common" morality only such approximation thereto as amounts to a denial of the thing itself. It is always the "common" honesty which defends vested wrongs. The oppressor has always relied on the "common" honesty of the masses too ignorant to think below the surface. Truly, our social hell is paved with good intentions.

Nor can I agree with Mr. Aitken's approval of the Socialist doctrine, "From every man according to his ability, to each according to his needs," as just though impracticable. It may be high counsel of individual perfection; but that which is just cannot rightly be imposed by force. And when enforced upon the unwilling then this Socialist doctrine is the same as that practised by that practical economist, Mr. Richard Turpin, of Hounslow Heath, who despoiled travelers "according to their ability." I submit that a higher expression of justice is this: "From every man according to benefits rendered." Mr. Aitken rejects the Socialist doctrine because he does not consider it practicable. I reject it because I consider the enforcement of it unfair. I am not impugning Mr. Aitken's intentions. I think he did not see clearly.

Like most of us, I should gladly accept and occupy any outposts surrendered by the enemy, but I should not minimize or soften one whit the logical declaration of principles. To preach "compensation" is to discredit ourselves, is to acknowledge justice in landlordism. Enthusiasm may be aroused by a principle, but not by a percentage.

I think, too, that Mr. Aitken is over sanguine. He believes doubtless that slavery would have yielded to a suggestion of compensation to slaveholding oppressors (not to slaves). But history shows that that great crime developed from an apologetic spirit, which became first complacent, then aggressive, and finally contemptuous and tyrannic. The South held the colonization societies in amused contempt. Garrison it hated as Ahab hated Elijah. The monster had become a "divine institution," and any one who questioned it was anathema—compensation or no compensation.

Mr. Aitken's proposal is born of impatience. But I think it is better to do work aright than to use questionable methods or questionable materials. "Compromise! that great serpent ever twining about the tree of life!"

The Kingdom of Heaven cannot be enacted on earth even by compensation to the dispossessed Devil.



A cyclone or blizzard has many of the attributes of a protective tariff. It is a barrier to the free interchange of commodities. It produces scarcity and enhances prices. It profits a few at the expense of the many. It is a benefit to the dealer in milk or coal or meat or other necessities of daily use, provided he is caught with a good stock on hand. The cab company does not grieve over the troubles of the street-railway company. It has all it can do to gather in the harvest which enforced custom has so suddenly created.

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON,