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sciousness; to do so would be to consent to a "rotten reform." The affair was all the more important since their abstinence or their consent practically made no difference. A three day's battle of words, a heated debate, long and eloquent speeches from every leader and would-be leader. Finally, that the Socialist Party in Parliament should not consent to this "rotten reform," it was agreed to by a great majority of these class-conscious heroes and apostles of the Socialist State of the future. The minority, however, declared that they would not be converted to this view. Thereupon the Chairman admonished the assembled comrades—who had been accusing one another of being infamous double-tongued liars, devoid of conscience—of the necessity for unanimity, for the Party wants unanimity more than its daily bread, and begs them not to offend against the tone of brotherhood which should prevail at all their gatherings. The following day they were called together to discuss the attitude of the Party on the question of imposing 500 millions of marks of other taxes. Empty benches, bored faces, phrases after phrases without a single new idea, no discussion, since on such practical questions those anointed with the sacred oil of Scientific Socialism have nothing to say. Following on this refreshing unanimity, a long-winded Resolution, full of pious wishes, was unanimously agreed to. Thereupon the gathering breaks up with a feeling of deep satisfaction that it had got rid of a thing the consideration of which demands some knowledge and thought. The Chairman—who by the way had availed himself with great financial success of the capitalistic system of production—demands the closing words, once more to incite the comrades to continuous combat against "Capitalism." Was he making fun of the delegates?

(To be continued.)

PROFESSIONAL ECONOMISTS VERSUS SINGLE TAXERS.

(For the Review.)

By J. A. DEMUTH.

To Alvin Saunders Johnson, Professor of Economics at Cornell University, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, under the caption "The Case Against the Single Tax," may be imputed the assumption of having won his case without having fired a single argumentative shot. This he presumes to have accomplished, in the very start, by a pose-suggesting implication.

After calling attention to the pronounced heterodoxy of the professional economists of the present time—instancing the economist as protectionist, as advocate of fiat money, as approver of private monopoly, as having socialistic leanings, and even as coquetting with philosophic anarchism, he affirms that "It would not be difficult, today, to find an economist who would joyfully serve as apologist for the Industrial Workers of the World." "In short," he

continues, "all the social heresies of matter and method find their exponents among economists standing high in their profession." Then follows, sententiously, and with supposedly crushing effect—"Except the Single Tax."

Recognizing that this "solar-plexus" must inevitably raise at least a surmise that there must be something radically wrong with either the Single Tax, or with the high-standing economists, he hastens to foreshield his colleagues—and himself—against any charge of narrow-mindedness by the assurance that "there are few economists who have not eagerly searched the pages of Henry George for ideas of scientific value." And found them not, of course.

Now, being an ardent Single Taxer and an humble follower of the "Prophet of San Francisco," and therefore quite destitute of professional armor, I shall nevertheless advance to the counter-charge with no backing other than a burning sense of the righteousness of our cause and an average portion of just ordinary common sense.

Professor Johnson apparently considers the heterogeneity of the professional economists and their aloofness in relation to Single Taxers, as *prima facie* evidence of the weakness of our cause. This is fortunate, as it can be shown quite clearly, I think, that if there is one thing more than another which characterizes Single Taxers it is homogeneity in respect to fundamental principles. We are united to a man, and perhaps without having given the matter special thought, in unqualified adherence to a certain principle, founded upon a verified, self-evident truth, and which, therefore, is impervious to fallacies or half-truths. If this principle can be established to the perception of our friends as entirely irrefutable, and professional economists of high standing are to be found advocating social and economic principles which contravene the fundamental principle upon which the philosophy of the Single Tax is based, then, surely, it should not be a difficult matter to fix the identity of the contestants in this "case" who have been merely beating the air.

It must be admitted, I assume, that verified truths cannot possibly conflict with each other. If professional economists endorse such principles as protectionism and private monopoly of public functions, and it is clearly shown that these heresies plainly conflict with self-evident truth, the recall of the implication that of all would-be reformers the Single Taxers are alone impossible of recognition, were surely in order. Furthermore, if the aloofness of professional economists can be explained only on the ground that the Single Tax does not appear, in the light of economic science, to further the best interests of society, then, clearly, "The Case against the Single Tax" must be held in *statu quo* pending the decision as to what constitutes "the best interests of society," and also pending proof that the various and varied and highly complicated and conflicting doctrines of professional economists are entitled to be called "economic science."

It cannot be denied that all knowledge is unscientific which cannot be made to conform to verified truth. And because all truths are established only by objective human experience, their negations are undemonstrable and

even inconceivable. For example: human experience has established the truth that one man may not destroy the life of another. Obviously this truth is self-evident, and, moreover, is unqualifiable, for the reason that its negation would present conditions wholly chaotic. And as the immediate corollary of this truth is the principle that conditions which render impossible the maintenance of this truth, must, in the nature of things, be conceived as a negation of the truth itself, the truth and its corollaries are equally self-evident.

If, now, we are able to demonstrate that access to land is absolutely and unqualifiedly necessary to the maintenance of each and every individual life, the principle thus obtained becomes a self-evident truth. Furthermore, if we are able to demonstrate that the results of every man's labor is absolutely and unqualifiedly his own—subject only to his complete concession of like rights to every other man—we have established this principle also as a self-evident truth.

As it is perfectly obvious that the second and third principles above referred to are direct corollaries of the first, we have three several self-evident truths, the negation of one of which negatives the other two. Now as the slightest qualification of a self-evident truth inevitably opens the way for its negation, it is plain that any economic, social or political doctrine which in the least infringes a self-evident truth, must result in conditions which cannot possibly be postulated as being in harmony with truth. And as the protective tariff and all other forms of taxation now in vogue clearly violate self-evident truths they cannot, by any stretch of logic, be set up as being *scientific*.

Now, if it can be shown that the Single Tax doctrine is a direct amplification of self-evident truth, and that "protection" and the other heresies of the professional economists are, on the contrary, violations of self-evident truth, we will have shown that our friends of the schools must "come off their perch" and "get busy" at a reconstruction of their "science." Even the highest-standing of them all must agree with us that truth is not a thing which is itself evolved. Truth was when the earth was but an oblate spheroid. Its origin was with the origin of all things. We do not create new truths, but we discover them. And truth is always the right way. Its outworking never materializes in war, injustice, poverty or disease, but in the opposites of these conditions. Now the advent of every child into the world marks the initiative exercise of a natural right. This natural right we call Equality of Opportunity. And that equality of opportunity is a self-evident truth is easily attested by considering its negation which, obviously, must be embodied in a contention that of all children born into the world only certain ones possess this natural right—manifestly an impossible conception, as it would involve human discrimination, which in turn, would involve the process of establishing right by might. Every child born into the world is, then, the equal of all those who have preceded him, and with all those who shall follow him, in respect to the elements without which life cannot be sustained. Now, as previously stated, the right to life includes the right to access to the elements without which life must cease. This right is, therefore, simply a corollary of

the right of equal opportunity. There can exist, therefore, no human power of whatever nature, whether it be monarchies, or whether it be democracies with majorities of millions to one, which may rightfully extinguish or curtail or in any manner modify, the natural right of a single individual. And as land includes sun and water and air, the only association of men which makes for the preservation and maintenance of natural rights is the state or community which recognizes, and adapts itself to, the fundamental principle that land is a natural element to which all have equal opportunity.

In view of the foregoing, to which all Single Taxers will subscribe to a man, how far, indeed, from the truth is our high-standing economist when he imputes to us the purpose of confiscating land! To confiscate is to deprive. Why, on the contrary, our lives are being devoted to preventing land being confiscated and monopolized, by and through titles which were originally obtained by rapine and murder.

The Single Tax in actual operation aims to accomplish practical equality of opportunity by requiring those who occupy land directly, to pay into a common fund the "increase in value of land that springs from the increase of population or other causes independent of the land itself and of its owner." The Single Tax is therefore, fundamentally and essentially, a plan for the practical recognition of the natural right of every man to equity in land.

Now, "the two contentions upon which the whole issue turns," according to Professor Johnson, and which if proved valid by the Single Taxers are to win the support of the professional economists, are: the "universal confiscation of land," and the justification of this measure on the theory that landowners form a class similar to former owners of slaves. For the very good reason that both contentions are gratuitous imputations, the Single Taxers will go down, generation after generation, to their graves, without having gained the endorsement of the professional economists, because they do not now, never have and never will advocate the "universal confiscation of land." Moreover Professor Johnson has never heard or seen it stated by Single Taxers, that "The landowners, . . . form a similar class: (to slave-owners); neither can he produce evidence that "they are regarded by the Single Taxers as typical monopolists and men of great wealth, an unacknowledged landed aristocracy." Neither does he know, or has he ever heard of a Single Taxer who contends that "Whether the landowner is rich or poor, he is, in Single Tax theory, a social parasite." Such balderdash is entirely gratuitous, and its utter grossness makes it difficult to answer on that account. The followers of Henry George are as truly abolitionists as were the followers of Lundy and Garrison—the latter having devoted their lives to the abolishment of chattel slavery, whereas the former are laboring in no lesser cause, namely, the abolition of industrial slavery. In this high calling it is our misfortune that we have been obliged to invade the field of the economists, who, not having seen the light, view our "programme" through distinctly economic spectacles. In not a single line of his paper has Professor Johnson indicated that he possesses any other than a merely economic sense of the philosophy of Henry

George. Single Taxers are indeed agreed that the landed-dog-in-the-manger and the speculator who buys land and holds it out of use for the increase in value to be created by other men's home-building, are nothing less than social parasites. But every home-builder is entitled to *just that thing* which forms the bed-rock of the Single Tax doctrine, namely, *access to land*. Are we then so devoid of a sense of the logical sequence of our fundamental principle that we can be charged with branding land-owners as social parasites? Hardly, inasmuch as land-owners are justified *as such* by the identical self-evident truth upon which our doctrine is based.

Who, then, is beating the air? Professor Johnson says "The Single Tax movement would, therefore, be aptly designated as a propaganda for the universal confiscation of land. And this designation the Single Taxers themselves would accept without reservation." Confiscation of land by whom—the State? In that case the land would be confiscated by a majority of the electors. Would the majority include both Single Taxers and land-owners? Or are the Single Taxers such addlebrains as to imagine they can do the job themselves? If the State may universally confiscate land, then the power that constitutes the State, whether it be kings or majorities, assumes the right to deprive men of their natural rights. In other words, this power of kings or majorities proposes to administer the State by ignoring the natural rights of individuals, which, in actuality, denies the reality of verified truths, and plunges into utter chaos the whole social cosmos. Which reduction to fundamental principles should convince the most optimistic freak that it can't be done; and the economist who holds himself aloof from Single Taxers for fear they may try to do it has simply neglected to think the matter through. Of course Professor Johnson and all the other professional economists who have searched the pages of Henry George understand that there is a chasmatical difference between confiscating land, and confiscating the increase in the value of land. Which makes it all the more mystifying that he should imagine the Single Taxers are bent on doing just the thing they particularly don't want to do and couldn't do if they did want to. To confiscate land would be to ignore the investment therein of honestly earned wealth; but to confiscate the *increase* in the *value* of land is the community's act, agreed upon by the community, in collecting that which the community has created, and that which the owner could not possibly have created. *To deprive a man of land is to do the thing which is diametrically opposed to the scheme for giving every man access to land.*

Now here are a few propositions, and a question:

- (1) The area of the world's surface is fixed beyond the possibility of adding thereto.
- (2) The population of the world is increasing.
- (3) The two preceding facts make it inevitable that particular tracts and sites of land will be increasingly more desirable than others.
- (4) All of the land is for all of the people; therefore those who wish to

occupy the more valuable tracts and sites, should pay the value thereof into a common fund for the use of all the people.

(5) Every man has a natural right to the products of his labor.

(6) Confiscation by the State of any man's labor is a clear violation of a natural right; therefore our present system of taxation is fundamentally wrong. (And the fact that taxes under the present system cannot possibly be, nor have ever been, equitably assessed, is only a logical sequence of violation of verified truth.)

(7) Taxes on any commodity made by individual labor is a tax on individual labor.

(8) Taxes on that which no man has made, which no man can make and which, therefore, no man has earned, is not a tax on labor.

(9) When the wealth which is created by population is used for public purposes and not for up-building of private fortunes, and when public revenues no longer represent confiscation of the rewards of labor, we shall have taken the road which leads towards pure democracy, and not before.

The foregoing are Single Tax propositions. The Question is: In whose pages, other than those of Henry George, can our friends, the professional economists, find a body of principles of greater "scientific value" than the above propositions? If not in the pages of Henry George, where will they find ideas of greater "scientific value" than those which are directly deducible from self-evident truths?

I have shown that "universal confiscation" of land is an impossibility, and that if it were a possibility, the Single Taxers would be the last people in the world to sanction it. I have also made it clear, I hope, that Professor Johnson is about as far from the truth as he can possibly get, when he charges that Single Taxers hold that all land-owners, rich or poor, are social parasites. I have shown that in assuming an attitude of being open to conviction, *the professor has imputed to the Single Taxers "two contentions" which are in direct conflict with the principles which are so persistently adduced as proof of the truth of our doctrine, namely, Equality of Opportunity.* To make a case against us is easy enough if it is permissible to distort facts, and especially facts upon which our contentions are based. But the general tone of the professor's paper does not indicate that he has consciously resorted to distorting; the "two contentions" are plainly constructed of straw, but this may be due entirely to a lack of other material, evidences of which abound throughout the entire essay and are too numerous to be noticed in detail. As to the co-operation of the professional economist: we will be glad thereof; but they are warned that they will do well to leave behind the special pride of their calling, namely, stilted involution. Our camp is illy adapted to statistics, percentages, algebraic demonstrations and about all the rest of their mental paraphernalia. And then they must have been born again. The Single Tax is a burning question. The heart is involved. Those having merely heads should not apply. Most of us have long since outgrown the crudities of what we once thought was religion, and have espoused instead the

Religion of Humanity, of which the Single Tax is the means for its practical outwork. Like the democracy of Jesus, the philosophy of Henry George does not require tomes of commentarial matter to make straight the highway to its acceptance. Scholarship is not necessary to differentiation between rank and cankering injustice, which violates every fundamental principle, and the mere intellectuality of algebraic demonstrations of the economic organism of a *pocket-knife*. No man can serve two such masters as Henry George and Alfred Marshall.

However heavy the shock Professor Johnson thinks he has given the Single Taxers by calling attention to the aloofness of professional economists, it is somewhat mitigated by the reflection that of those in high standing but few have been called into the practical affairs of the country, and that one of the most prominent of these is as good a Single Taxer as one could wish, except in name. And we are not jealous of our name. We are jealous only of the rights of the poor and short-sighted, whether the latter are of the rich or poor.

A remarkable thing about the professional economist is that they can find such consuming interest in merely surveying the conditions which wring the hearts of Single Taxers; that while Socialists and Anarchists and Single Taxers are intent on rectifying existing wrongs, our professional friends, with car-loads of paper and tons of pencils, are immersed in analyzing commercial and trade relations, are intent in referring to, and quoting from, and agreeing with one another in part, and dissenting from one another in part—all, apparently with no definite purpose. After generations of writers and an endless multiplicity of "works," they are united on no fixed principles, and hardly two are found who agree with each other. Of what earthly or rather human use is the economic analysis of a pocket-knife or a copper kettle? How are these things related to principles affecting human relations? It might be highly interesting and entertaining, perhaps, to compile an authentic history of an old fiddle; to relate the love episodes and tragedies to which it has been an acoustic witness, but what practical use could we make of such a history, even with its remotest ramifications amplified? No one can follow far the rhythmic or dynamic effects of the simplest trade transaction, and would get nowhere if he could. Yet by far the greater bulk of economic literature is devoted to a chase after the *ignus fatuus*. Nowhere do we find an economist who reasons from verified truths to principles which should govern our economic relations. They do little else than take conditions as they find them, and then analyze and compare and note, and compile statistics, until "Dismal" has become fully justified as an adjectival handle for their alleged science.

That the foregoing "slam" embodies more or less truth is indicated by the following admission from Professor Johnson himself. He says: "The fact that the economists still hold themselves aloof from Single Tax doctrine requires, however, a new explanation. The last three decades have produced a marvelous increase in their numbers; we have now a hundred well trained

economists to one of 1880. It was inevitable that the narrow orthodoxy of the earlier period should be broken down by such expansion in numbers. *Hundreds of investigators, EACH STRIVING FOR AT LEAST SOME SMALL VARIATION BY WHICH TO DISTINGUISH HIMSELF FROM THE MASS OF HIS FELLOWS.....* There is more of this, but the foregoing is sufficient.

The means of ascertaining the whole number of well trained economists in the year 1880 are not at hand, so that the multiplier the professor has given us is of no avail for the purpose of ascertaining the number of the present-day trained economists; we may, however, assume that there are great numbers of them. Which explains in a great measure—if we assume that each and every economist has been “striving for at least some small variation by which to distinguish himself from the mass of his fellows,” the formidable complexity and voluminosity of their literature. And to show that Professor Johnson has probably contributed his share to the dismalness of the “science,” witness the following:

“It is almost a waste of time to inspect the Single Tax project for destroying the slum. It is the value of land that forces the city builder (sic) to occupy every possible foot of ground space, to pile story above story, to subdivide each story into the smallest apartments and rooms that can be tenanted by living man The Single Tax promises immunity from taxation on the building and so would offer an inducement to covering still more of the ground space, and pushing the stories still higher towards the sky. The Single Taxers propose, then, to relieve urban congestion by means which would increase the number of persons to be sheltered by each unit of roof.”

Here he gives us a fair illustration of his misconception of the whole matter by substituting the “city builder” for the land-owner. The would-be occupiers of a building and the would-be builder are in the same class—both being desirous of occupying the desired site with the least cost to themselves. Manifestly, the owner of the valuable site is in a class by himself—his personal interests being opposed to all others. It is the land-owner, and not the builder nor the tenants, who forces every foot of ground to be used. To say that “It is the value of the land that forces the city builder to pile story upon story,” is to identify the would-be builder (and also the would-be tenant) with the owner of the “value of the land;” whereas the value of the land and the landlord are one and the same creature, and this creature is wholly responsible for “story upon story.” According to Professor Johnson: “The Single Taxers propose to relieve urban congestion by means which would increase the number of persons to be sheltered by each unit of roof.” Now if “unit of roof” means a certain fraction of a given area of roof, then what we Single Taxers are trying to do is to diminish congestion in our cities by increasing congestion in our cities. It is very stupid of us not to have seen this before.

It has been hinted at in the foregoing pages that there is a decided lack of definite suggestion in the works of our professional economists in respect to action or even postulated principles which may serve to guide us in adopt-

ing measures for greater social and economic welfare. A concrete example will suffice for a representative case, inasmuch as the author here quoted stands high among the distinguished authorities on Taxation, not only in our own land but throughout the world. His work is on "Progressive Taxation in Theory and Practice," and bears unmistakable evidence of extensive research and broad scholarship—if a layman is competent to judge. As a more or less ideal system he seems to favor "progressive" taxation, but there is apparent a laudable attempt at fairness and open-mindedness in considering the opinions of other prominent writers, from nearly all of whom he has quoted. In considering the demands of ideal justice our eminent author favors some sort of progression, but points out that "It must not be overlooked that high rates of progression may engender or augment attempts at fraud and evasion." From his concluding chapter we read as follows: "If, therefore, we sum up the whole discussion, we see that while progressive taxation is to a certain extent defensible as an ideal, and as the expression of the theoretical demand for the shaping of taxes to the test of individual faculty, it is a matter of considerable difficulty to decide how far or in what manner the principle ought to be actually carried out in practice. Theory itself cannot determine any definite scale of progression whatever. While it is highly probable that the ends of justice would be more nearly subserved by some approximation to a progressive scale, considerations of expediency as well as the uncertainty of interrelations between various parts of the entire tax system should tend to render us cautious in advocating any general application of the principle. In the last resort, however, the crucial point is the state of the social consciousness and the development of the feeling of civic obligation." And a little farther on we read: "While progression of some sort is demanded from the standpoint of ideal justice, the practical difficulties in the way of its general application are well nigh insurmountable For a future development of the idea we must rely on an improvement in the tax administration, on a more harmonious method of correlating the public revenues and on a decided growth in the alacrity of individuals to contribute their due share to the common burdens."

From Rainey's moving pictures of the wild animals at the Water Hole we know that there are times when the lion and the lamb lie down together. But shall we ever secure a picture of a procession of tax-payers treading on each other's feet in their struggle for the credit and honor of leading the procession to the office of the tax collector? Possibly, but the contingency is still so remote that we may well merge our plan for viewing the procession with others anticipatory of the Crack of Doom.

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