

office where the Single Tax is not involved?

Do we thus condemn ourselves to the sterility of the Socialists? But are the Socialists sterile? Does the writer of this letter attempt to measure the influence that the Socialists as a militant body have exercised on current legislation? This legislation may not always have been wise, but that is another question. How much factory legislation, child labor laws, tenement regulation, municipal ownership, etc., can be traced as the indirect result of the demands of the Socialist party? Let our friend consider.

Nor is the illustration of the abolition cause a peculiarly fortunate one, even if they did "fail to reckon with the power of inertia." They went right up against the "power of inertia," with the result that an abolition sentiment was created that prepared the country for the Emancipation Proclamation of Lincoln, and made that task more easy for him. This is what Seward meant when he said to Emerson, "You make history and we profit by it."

Here is the summing up of the matter: The Single Tax is too big a cause to serve as any man's political kite. His candidacy should interest us only when the cause is involved. The Single Tax movement has been either too much or too little of an independent political movement, too much where it lent its sanction to a thousand candidacies, too little where it lost the opportunity to press its demands upon nominees at election time for some concession to the principle for which we contend. And its thousand candidacies to which it lent its sanction has given it a thousand little office holders who are, with some notable exceptions, of course, as little use to the cause as if they were dead and buried. Most of them are forgotten—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

MR. E. C. CLARK, of Cleveland, N. Y., in a beautifully written letter in the *Oswego Daily Palladium*, administers some telling blows to the theory of corporal punishment, and incidentally takes a fling at Billy Sunday.

IS POLITICAL ECONOMY SCIENCE OR PURE FAKE?

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

In the last issue of the REVIEW you have headed an editorial with the above suggestive question. You may not be aware that a few years ago a debate extending over some months was carried on in the pages of one of the heavier London magazines, by Dr. John Beattie Crozier and Mr. H. G. Wells, under substantially the same title, "Is a science of Sociology possible." The first named economist maintained that sociology is a real science and can be securely established on certain natural human instincts or tendencies, while Mr. Wells insisted that owing to the fact that man is still in the making and always developing new and unpredictable qualities, no uniformity in his reactions to stimuli can reasonably be expected, and that therefore the basis of a true science is wanting. Mr. Wells then went on to argue, as readers of his books can imagine he would, that all that the society re-constructor can do is to proceed by the empirical method of picturing to himself ideal states or utopias and then endeavouring to mould society after the pattern he has set for himself. It is needless to say that both these distinguished writers urged their cases ably, and had Dr. Crozier been not only the broad and liberal thinker that he is, but a Single Taxer in addition, his triumph in the debate would have been complete. Lacking as it did, however, the precipitating reagent which the Single Tax philosophy provides, his collection of so-called principles seemed to produce a muddled mixture which might well have evoked just the question asked by your article.

To me it has always seemed that the whole difficulty arises from a failure to realize what at bottom a science really is. We should constantly remind ourselves that we use language wrongly when we speak of a science of engineering or a science of government. A science is not a statement of what man can, would, or

should do, but is a formula describing the tendencies of natural forces acting either without obstruction, or modified by the tendencies of other natural forces. Astronomy may be regarded as the purest science we have knowledge of, for it tells only of the natural laws which regulate the movements of the Heavenly bodies, and which cannot be modified or altered by human action. If we were as watchful of our language as we should be, we would speak of all human achievements as "arts," with the purpose of distinguishing them clearly from Nature's unchangeable operations which, when reduced to formulae, are properly termed "science."

The mistake into which all the orthodox economists fell was that of starting their observations and beginning their search for first principles at a point where natural law had already been interfered with and where artificial law had given some men the power to obstruct the natural tendency of man to satisfy his desires with the least expenditure of effort. When the "science" of economics was born and began to look around for its subject-matter, it failed to observe that the "art" of government had arrived first and had disturbed and confused the data on which such a science must depend for support. The consequences have been just what might have been expected. The muddledom as between natural and artificial conditions on which the original observations were made, and from which subsequent deductions were drawn, has become worse at every attempt to simplify the "science," which is neither a true science nor an art, but an irreconcilable compound of the two. The most remarkable example of the confusion that has been caused by this failure to distinguish between two utterly different categories is to be found in a little manual of political economy by Professor J. Shields Nicolson, of Edinburgh University. In an apparent unconsciousness that he has wandered far out of the region of political economy or indeed of any speculations that have the remotest connection with science, he devotes a chapter to a consider-

ation of the uses of chemical fertilizers and artificial manures as an aid to farming. I confess it afflicted me with a kind of giddiness which it is hard to describe. Where am I? I asked myself. Am I being taught the natural laws which regulate human action, or am I simply told how to do things? Is this a scientific manual or a farmers hand-book? Well might Professor Newcomb whom you quote, declare that "there are no economic principles to save statesmen the labor of working out each case on its merits," for what conceivable principles could possibly mediate between the component parts of a duality like this?

It is not surprising that Professor Seligman in his article on "Housing" in the *National Real Estate Magazine* for November, should declare that "taxation is a much more complicated and subtle business than it appears to the ordinary tyro." Starting from a base that is neither pure science nor human art, but an incongruous combination of the two, how should it be possible to formulate any principles of taxation that would hold men together in relations of equity? Was it not inevitable that the complication and subtleness should increase at each attempt at simplification, until all hope of clear definition had to be abandoned? The pseudo-science we have hitherto known as political economy has covered itself with confusion and proclaimed itself a failure. We who have caught sight of the real distinction between the science of human relationships and the art of government may well congratulate ourselves upon being the custodians of a great economic truth of which the world is not yet worthy, a truth so simple that the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein, a truth so sublime in its remoter implications as to change the outlook upon life to all who have been privileged to lay hold upon it. Political Economy is a science. What passes under that name in many of our Universities is what you term it, "pure fake."—ALEX. MACKENDRICK.

NINETY-TWO residents of New York have a taxable income exceeding \$500,000 each.