

you may take heart and hope, and set it down that a great truth once discovered will prevail, no matter what difficulties delay it, nor how long delayed.—GEORGE D. CARRINGTON, Chicago, Ill.

### THE DIFFICULTIES OF DEMOCRACY.\*

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

I have read with deep interest your article on "The Difficulties of Democracy," in the *International Journal of Ethics*, and now venture to send you my most sincere congratulation, as I should gladly do, if opportunity offered, to the editor of the *Journal* on having secured so able a contribution to his January number.

You have done what much needed to be done. You have expounded the difficulties that lie embedded in the very principle of democracy. You have delivered those of your readers who have sympathetically got your view-point, from the tyranny of phrases which, like "the blessed word Messopotamia," make us feel we know all about it, while they only serve to conceal our ignorance from ourselves. I feel sure you have cleared the way in the minds of many for a longer-sighted patience with the slow grinding of the mills of God, for a larger hope, and for a more stubborn faith in the ideal.

I suppose no great idea that has ever been let loose upon the world has revealed its full meaning or its most remote implications to the men of the time. Still less perhaps has it brought with it any indication of the difficulties to be surmounted in its realization. When Luther nailed his protest to the church-door of Erfurt, he probably little contemplated all that was implied in "the right of private judgment," or conceived of the logical conclusions to which it has led; nor did he probably foresee that the protest would have to be renewed by each successive generation with new difficulties arising at each forward step. It should not surprise us, therefore, that only in these latter days

when converging rays of light from the memories of the past and the experiences of the present are illuminating our efforts at state-craft, we are discovering new meanings in the idea of democracy and new difficulties in the way of their realization.

As you rightly suggest, the shibboleths of democracy serve little purpose in bringing us nearer to an understanding of its inward meaning. "Government of the people by the people and for the people" takes no account of the man who wants neither to govern or to be governed, but who simply wishes to be let alone to govern himself. The other phrases which you quote cover, each of them, only a small part of the issues of democracy, and leave its difficulties unprovided for. In short, I believe the thought of the time is just ripe for such a broad generalization as that contained in your third paragraph, "Democracy is not so much a system of people's power as a state of social consciousness." And later on you remark that "it may be the cure for the ills of democracy is not only more democracy, but more knowledge and more love." Were it not that the last word has been spoiled "by all ignoble use," and made to serve the purposes of a cheap evangelicalism which affects a deep concern for the future of a man's soul with a corresponding indifference as to his economic welfare on earth, I should accept the last-quoted sentence as going to the heart of the problem.

Since settling in America I have been making acquaintance with the writing of authors who were only known to me by name before. Among these Professor Royce, of Harvard, has captured my highest appreciation. In his latest book, "The Problem of Christianity," the concept of "loyalty to an idealized and beloved community" is shown to be the idea that has underlain and inspired all the institutional religions that have ever arisen or ever will arise; which has been the soul, of which the creeds and formulas were but the vestures; and which will survive them all. I fancy you would be willing to substitute the word "loyalty" in the broad human sense in which Royce uses it, for the words "more knowledge and more

\* See *International Journal of Ethics*, of Jan. 1915, for article, "The Difficulties of Democracy," by Joseph Dana Miller.

love." We certainly want some new word unmagnetized by use for other purposes, that shall connote the ideas of a deep and affectionate respect for all the privacies and sanctities and liberties of individual life, along with a determination to extract from experience a larger and truer knowledge of how to give effect to those feelings. Only in such a state of social consciousness, can a solvent be found for the difficulties and pitfalls of democracy which you so ably set forth. Such a demonstration as you have given, of the impossibility of democracy till the human mind is ready for it, would be depressing were it not for the fact that evidence exists that this preparedness is already far on the way. A sense of collective responsibility for the wrongs and injustices of society is to be found now in the consciences of the well-to-do to an extent that constitutes this a new age. Many of those who are conducting charities at present are suffering from a nausea at the necessity for charity, brought on by this rising sense of loyalty to the idealized community. In every direction, then, the man of faith in human nature can discern signs that the condition of "more knowledge and more love" necessary for a true democracy, is steadily on the increase.

The aim of all reform should of course be to facilitate the natural tendency to the spread of this sense of loyalty to the community. But as you appropriately remind your readers the greatest obstacle to the dissemination of this spirit is the poverty in which so large a number of the community are steeped. All will agree with your dictum, "It may be safely affirmed that democracy is only possible under conditions where inequalities of fortune are not greater than inequality of human intelligence and character." When we have broken the last barrier of circumstance which makes the realization of a true democracy impossible; when men are free to earn livings and to retain for themselves all the benefits that accrue to increased diligence and efficiency then we may confidently look for the beginnings of a human brotherhood such as it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive of.

If your modesty will permit the printing of this letter in the *REVIEW*, I shall of course be glad that my unworthy testimony to the excellence of your article should reach some of the subscribers who have not been privileged as I have been to read the article itself.—ALEX. MACKENDRICK, Boston, Mass.

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#### COULD A TAX ON LAND VALUES BE PASSED ON?

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A common objection to land values taxation, shared by many who approve of the principle, as well as by some opponents, is that taxes on land values, though levied on the owners, would be passed on to the tenants or purchasers in increased prices. This belief is probably due to the fact that the taxes we are accustomed to—taxes on industry—are always passed on in this way. Taxes on tea and rates on houses are paid by the users ("consumers") of tea and houses, and if boots were taxed 1s. a pair the purchasers or consumers of boots would have to pay an additional 1s., or more. The reason is that taxes on commodities, such as houses, boots, etc., check their production and thereby lessen the supply until higher prices can be obtained. The taxes are added to the cost of production. But land is not produced by labor. It is a fixed quantity which cannot be affected by human action, though the market supply can be either increased or decreased. The effect of taxing all land on its true value is to increase the market supply by making owners of unused or under-used land anxious to part with it. The price of land, like other prices, is regulated by supply and demand, and an increased market-supply (demand remaining as before) must inevitably reduce prices.—ARTHUR H. WELLER.

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PORTLAND, Maine, now has a Single Tax League. Rev. Dr. Henry Blanchard is president; Mr. George E. Kittridge, vice president; Mrs. Mary L. Adams, secretary; and Rev. J. B. Shepperd, treasurer. Mr. E. P. Wentworth is director. An active propaganda will be instituted.