

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.

any one thinks that he has the right of absolute ownership in anything, for he knows that the State's power of taxation and even confiscation knows no limits in emergency.

The most that the Single Taxer requires to contend for the establishment of his case, and he does not always need that, is that the right of ownership created by production is a more sacred right than State created rights such as titles, and that necessities of the State shall be met by levying on the second up to their full annual value, before touching at all upon the first. That it may be necessary at times to trench on the first was made evident by the war.

The logic of events is doing more for sound economic processes than all our propaganda. The tariff, instead of furnishing a plenteous trough in which there was room enough for all the hogs to wallow, is now becoming a bone of contention, sharpened at both ends, which threatens to split the party of great moral ideas. (Does anyone call it that any more?) The Mayors' Council of New York State, backed up by the Committee on Taxation and Retrenchment of a Republican Legislature, actually advocates the repeal of the Personal Property Tax in New York State, and would have the bill passed if it could find a way of making up to New York and Buffalo the taxes that these cities would lose thereby.

New York City's legislative body, with many grimaces at the unpalatable dose, has finally decided to avail itself of the permission given it by the State Legislature for the purpose of remedying the housing shortage, to try the experiment of untaxing new dwelling houses for ten years, and already the real estate papers are chronicling the great building boom foreshadowed. The reaction from the war experience when government had to assume the role of divine or malign providence has discredited the socialistic programme as a remedy for social ills. More and more clearly is it seen that government is a clumsy instrument for performing functions outside its own domain. In business it is about as effective and graceful as a seal on dry land. If internecine conflict due to capitalistic arrogance and union labor bitterness can be postponed for five years, there is still a chance that civilization may be saved, at least in America, for there are faint signs like the foregoing that we have begun to move in the right direction. But so far as we can see with ordinary vision, moralizing or rationalizing has had nothing to do with it. We have explored every blind alley that our pseudo-reformers could discern anywhere on the horizon, and we marched plumb up against the wall at the end before admitting that we could go no further. But we have not gone up them twice, and now we seem to have seen some traces of the street, which we should have tried first, and which opens out more broadly the farther we penetrate into it.

No! the movement to which Henry George gave a sublime impetus, and which has continued under the uninspiring (except to its apostles) name of Single Tax is not a "back to the land" movement, nor a property in land confiscation movement, but a movement to restore to everybody his right of properly safeguarded ownership in land, safe-

guarded to the extent that no one's ownership of any land shall be equivalent to another man's exclusion from the land, and the relegation of governments, National, State and local, to the very limited functions which they can perform without endangering the common freedom.

The very fecundity of our law making bodies is forcing on the public attention the need for this latter policy. No man can begin to remember the number of governmental agencies now created for the public welfare. The natural characteristic of such bodies is to perpetuate themselves and extend their powers. No human brain can keep track of their activities.

MARTIN McMIX.

The Time is Here

AT no time in the history of the country was there a more opportune time for Single Taxers to advance their cause than exists at present. Wide dissatisfaction exists throughout the country among the producers. They complain of high prices, high rents, high taxes and unemployment. What better situation could be asked by those inoculated with the Single Tax to give the cause a tremendous advance? As one that has been connected with the Single Tax movement for many years may I say that now is the accepted time for all that have this cause at heart to actively take part in the Single Tax political party movement.

It will be remembered that the writer was secretary and treasurer of the Chicago Single Tax Club for nine years, and that under his term of office the club went into political action from the standpoint of propaganda and not with the idea of electing anyone. At that time more converts to the cause and more real free advertising was obtained than in the entire life of the club which extended over a period of fifteen years. Experience has proven that the majority of people are only interested in political matters that affect their personal well-being and discuss these affairs at election time. I regretted very much that I had not the financial resources to carry on this growing movement that is crystallizing into a substantial following and that the support of those who were not in accord with this necessary and most important step was lacking.

How long must we follow in the wake of every palliative measure, devote our time, money and energy to indirection, inference and the political montebank? Admitting that a certain time is necessary for incubation is there not a time when the chick must peck through the shell? History does not record a reform or movement that gained recognition and was adopted into law that was not made a political issue in some form. Single Taxers have seen in their time reform movements of a superficial nature that were unheard of when they first espoused the cause become not only great movements but were actually enacted into law. Single Tax propaganda without political action and a party for the following to rally around only can give us the opportunity to choose between the lesser of two evils. What hurts us most is that without political action our