

## ADDRESS OF J. D. MILLER.

I am aware that to those not interested in a reform any claim of its progress made by its friends will seem in the absence of visible signs, to be attributable to the natural enthusiasm of the zealot. While the tendency of the advocate of a truth to magnify what is trivial or incidental, may be admitted, yet I think it is nevertheless true that the advocate actively warring for a principle is no more likely to be deceived than the individual who watches the phenomenon unsympathetically from without. For the latter will be impressed only by such incidents as are large enough to receive popular or newspaper recognition; the lesser minutiae of happenings, the gathering volume of smaller occurrences, possessing cumulatively a significance, are more than likely to be lost upon him. To these latter, who are of course the great majority, the progress of the Single Tax movement will seem to have been arrested by the death of Henry George in 1897, and to have almost ceased with the decline of popular interest in his theories. Yet I venture to assert that the Single Tax is to-day more widely accepted than at any time in its history.

This is testified to in the altered attitude of thoughtful minds toward its advocates. We are no longer stigmatized as anarchists and disturbers of social order. Attempts to find new objects of taxation have not been wholly abandoned; nevertheless, there is a sensibly increasing appreciation of the fact that the efforts to tax personalty are unavailing; governors no longer propose new and drastic measures for its enforcement. There is, too, an increasing disinclination to accept the conclusions of political economy, the professors of which are busy readjusting their theories to meet the new skepticism.

A great truth does not enter the world; it is always in the world. Truth does not blaze to eyes of any single individual, surveying the expanse of human experience, like Keats Balboa,

“Silent upon a peak in Darien.”

Truth comes to us in broken lights.

Henry George did not discover a great truth; he emphasized it—and with what splendid emphasis! “’Tis his at last who says it best,” somewhere says Lowell. Amerigo Vespucci found America, but it was Columbus who gave it to the world. Others before George, with indistinct vision, had descried the continent of the new hope, had embarked on voyages of discovery, and had returned with stories quaint as those of Marco Polo. But George alone had returned with map and chart and compass; he like Vespucci had trod the new continent, but like Columbus also, had given that continent to a world. So we may say proudly of the leader whom we delight to honor that he has doubled the world’s area for the children of men—doing what the others had hardly dreamed of doing.

We know these men and they are great names, the precursors of Henry George—Gerrard Winstanley, Spence, Ogilvie, Dove, and that knot of brilliant Frenchman to whom George has dedicated “Protection or Free Trade.”

Perhaps it is not too much to say that here in this city where Mr. George's two great triumphs were won—the last in which he triumphed in a glorious death—we take positively and relatively more economic rent than is taken in any city in the world, with the possible exception of New Zealand.

With the New York mayoralty contest in 1886 in which Mr. George ran for the chief executive office of the city, which then comprised only what is now known as the Borough of Manhattan, the Single Tax movement in this city began. Many of us as very young men were converted at that time. In this city we have done something—we have done much. We have a separate assessment of land and improvements, and we have a par value assessment law. This was secured through the efforts of Single Taxers.

#### MASSACHUSETTS.

Going from New York to Boston the progress we have made under the marvelously tactful leadership of Mr. C. B. Fillebrown, president of the Massachusetts League, is evidenced in the friendly attitude of the Boston press as well as the *Republican* of Springfield, by all odds the best exemplar of high class journalism in the United States to-day. Numbers of eminent converts have been made in that State—converts at least to the first step we would take, who are perhaps more efficient influences than they would be were they to be designated as Single Taxers, or as accepting our doctrines in their fulness.

#### CLEVELAND

In Cleveland, too, the Single Tax is slowly winning out. Let us make no mistake about this. It would be so even if it were only because the Mayor, whose policies have continuously triumphed, had dedicated his life and splendid talents to the cause of Progress and Poverty. This would of itself be the means of emphasising how clear sighted and efficient a true knowledge of economic laws can make a public official—and that the best mayor of the best governed city in the United States is one with us in hope and belief. But the fight in Cleveland is more than this. Those very policies tend to our goal—they are making for our triumph. If there are any newspaper men here I want to tell them in confidence if they will promise to let it go no further than their readers, that Tom Johnson doesn't care a straw for three cent fares, or even for municipal ownership of street car lines. If that were the goal he would have abandoned it long ago. If we will read his purposes beneath his policies we can determine the goal for ourselves. Behind his policies, growing ever larger and larger to popular apprehension, is that purpose, big with hope for the race, which we of this convention have met to confer upon, and to endow if possible with the power that comes of fuller co-operation and greater organized effort.

#### GREAT BRITAIN.

One of the most gratifying signs of progress is the advance made in Great Britain. The fight has begun there in the introduction into the House of

Commons of what is known as the Scottish Land Bill, which was passed by the Commons by a large majority, and turned down by the House of Lords.

This bill provides for the rating of land values for municipal, but not for imperial purposes. It is a small beginning, but that is not particularly significant. What is significant is the spirit in which this fight has begun. Neither the friends nor the enemies of the measure are under any delusion as to what it means. By the friends of the movement, even by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman himself, it is hailed as a beginning only, in words that leave no doubt of his intention, and by its enemies it is condemned for what it is—namely, as embodying the doctrine of Henry George, who taught that the land of a country was for the people of that country, and not for the lords of its dominion.

Unquestionably the local sentiment as embodied in the views of the municipal councils has moved faster than the convictions of Parliament, and this has urged Parliament to move more rapidly than it otherwise would. That such local sentiment can be traced to the work of our Single Tax brothers, with their effective organization—an organization which meets every day in the year now—is proof of the efficiency of co-operation and the loyal support that British Single Taxers have given to organized work in that country. We must not be too sanguine, but it now seems entirely likely that we are on the eve of a great triumph for our principles in the United Kingdom. It is not going to be done all at once. As young Winston Churchill said in that remarkable speech at Drury Lane Theatre, "They had pulled the curtain up on a piece that was going to have a long run."

Now let us go a little ways back to realize how this movement of ours has grown. A few years ago, to quote Mr. Asquith, it was regarded as a fad of economic doctrinaires. It has now behind it the active and growing support of almost all the great urban communities of the Kingdom. Yet it will be remembered that when Henry George lectured in England, though he received the blessing of John Ruskin, and was listened to respectfully at Cambridge, he was received with open hostility by Oxford, and the Liverpool Reform Club hastened to rescind the invitation it had extended to him. In 1902 the Commons rejected a bill to tax land values by a majority of 71, and in 1905 by a majority of 90. Yet in the last general election every liberal candidate with two or three exceptions was pledged to the taxation of land values. Is there any movement in history that has advanced with such rapid strides?

#### NEW ZEALAND.

A British Parliamentary document has just been issued showing the effect of land value taxation in New Zealand, New South Wales and South Australia. This Parliamentary blue book shows that the tax, in the very words of the report, "stimulates building," "renders it unprofitable to hold land for prospective increment in value." "It has compelled" (again in the language of the Report) "owners either to build or to sell to those who would build." The largely increased building and re-building in Wellington is attributed in the

report to the imposition of the new tax. This blue book tells us that rents show a tendency to decrease, not to increase. All that Single Taxers confidently predict as a result of the application of their principles, has been effected by a crude, blundering, and inadequate adoption of such principles. This Mr. Regan in a recent number of *THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW*, has pointed out in an elaborate resume of what has been done in his adopted country of New Zealand. But inadequate as it is, what wonders it has effected, quite sufficient several years ago to convert Mr. Connolly, then our consul to Auckland, who in his official capacity of consul had come to that country to scoff and had remained to pray.

#### GERMANY.

Let us now turn to Germany. Nine years ago the German government began taxing the land of the newly acquired colony of Kiautchou 6 per cent. on its capital value. It may have been the force of example that induced city after city in Germany to follow that same system of raising revenue. This tax is small, from 2 to 5 per mille of the selling value of land. But it is levied on all land alike, whether improved or unimproved, and three hundred cities and towns have adopted it—practically all the larger communities. In addition to this many German cities have adopted an increment tax, to be paid when the land changes hands. This tax is termed the *zuwachsteuer* and is rapidly becoming a favorite mode with German municipalities of recovering increment values attaching to land. This tax cannot have any marked social effect, but this way of regarding land has led to a broader policy in the acquirement of such land as is increased in value by the building of public improvements and leasing by town governments. And this policy is now being urged in the larger national schemes of canal construction, and Germany is on the way to make greater gains, since this policy must grow by what it feeds on. German cities do not squander their franchise rights as we do, and this has resulted in their retaining much of that value, which with us goes into the pocket of the franchise landlord.

After touching upon the progress that has been made in Sweden and Denmark, and the recent labors of Robert Braun in Hungary, Mr. Miller concluded as follows :

This is a brief and all too inadequate summary of the chief facts of our progress. A beginning had been made. It now devolves upon us to take up the work anew under organization, to win other victories and to make other converts. This splendid convention augurs well for the spirit in which the work of the coming year will be entered upon.

Long and arduous is the war for human rights. . But happy indeed is the young man or young woman who possessing youth and strength is enlisted in this struggle. How poor in comparison, with the paucity of like glorious opportunities, seem the generations that have preceded ours. The Scripture somewhere says, I think, that hapless is that people who do not possess a vision. Here is a vision indeed. Here, too, are triumphs to be won, not for isolated communities, not for a nation alone, but for the race ! How it thrills

one to think that to every step of our progress the heart of all humanity must beat time!

Mr. John J. Murphy made a short speech on "The Objects of the Conference." The session adjourned at one o'clock for dinner.

### AFTERNOON SESSION OF FIRST DAY.

The Conference re-convened at 2:45 P. M., and listened to the committee on Rules and the Committee on Conference Organization, the reports of which were adopted. The latter committee recommended the following as permanent officers: Chairman, W. A. Douglass, Toronto; Vice-Chairmen, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Boston, Mass.; Dr. Wm. Preston Hill, St. Louis, Mo.; Hon. Brand Whitlock, Toledo, Ohio; Mrs. Jennie L. Munroe, Washington, D. C.; John B. Howarth, Detroit, Mich.; Secretary, Joseph Dana Miller, New York; Assistant Secretaries, Chas. J. Ogle, Baltimore, Md.; and W. E. Barker, New York City.

W. A. Douglass on taking the chair said in part:

"When I started for this conference I dreamed of no such honor as this. From away in the far desolate north, away beyond the bounds of the United States I came here trying to do what I could by shouting in the army of the Lord, where I have shouted for the last twenty years, often under the most extraordinary circumstances.

I do not like to boast, but some times when I look back at the past I cannot help but think, in a sense, of my own utter recklessness.

Occupying a prominent position, as I did, with a financial institution, and knowing that the whole Board of Directors would be opposed to me, I allowed my name to be presented as the President of the Single Tax Association, at a time when it was small, when there were only a few of us and we were looked upon as communists, anarchists and everything else that was bad, ready to withdraw the linch-pin from beneath the chariot of society, and let it fall back into chaos. That is about the reputation that we had at that time.

It was then I wrote a little pamphlet, a very humble little pamphlet, after it was published I handed, in the most innocent way, a copy of it to a friend of mine who was the editor of a religious paper. Within the next week, to my amazement, I found myself there described in the most scathing terms. I was misrepresented in all that I had put forward in that little argument, and by which I had tried to show that a man who gets a piece of land and says to the whole of humanity, "you shan't work here" puts on the necks of his fellow men a weight to keep them crushed down to hopeless, helpless poverty. Well, the description given of me in that paper was such, that happening to fall in the hands of my wife, in humility she went to her room and wept tears at the vile thing I was described there. And this paper was an organ of the church and the editor a man who had been my friend.

That was not the end of it. They continued to attack and threaten, but