

## AN UNWRITTEN LETTER.

Here is a letter which never was written, and never could be written: It is from a member of any legislature to any political economist occupying a chair in any university.

Dear Sir:—Political economists as a class are the engineers of efficiency in matters of legislation affecting the class of subjects in which you are proficient. As a member of the legislature of — I desire to ask if you can point to any legislation directly attributable to the teachings of your profession? What fundamental principles of political economy are to be found in the standard works from which you teach which have been the direct or indirect cause of any wise law-making to which you can point?

To this letter that never was written no affirmative or satisfactory reply could ever be made or ever will be made.

## A NEW APPROACH TO THE SINGLE TAX.

See portrait of Louis Wallis (frontispiece).

The most significant phases of the Socialist movement in recent years has been the spread of its doctrines among the clergy. So popular have socialistic doctrines become that the Christian Socialists today constitute no inconsiderable part of the whole clergy and notably so in the Church of England.

It is therefore not surprising to thoughtful observers to note a similar advance among Single Taxers. Many Henry George men have done yeoman service in carrying the doctrine of economic freedom to this group, but none has been more efficient, either as lecturer or author, than Louis Wallis of Chicago. Partial reports of his work by the present writer and by Mr. Wallis himself have appeared in the *Public* from time to time, but no attempt has ever been made to set out at any length the new and effective methods by which he raises the Single Tax issue.

In order to make plain the purpose of Mr. Wallis' work, it might be well to delve a little into the history of the free land cru-

sade. Henry George was a prophet rather than an economist. His doctrine was not the cold calculus of economics but the fiery evangel of democracy. The whole movement was at first distinctly religious. The zeal of a religious revival characterized its gatherings. In the early eighties it was a crusade for the salvation of the world from poverty. Henry George himself addressed large and enthusiastic audiences. "Progress and Poverty" sold throughout the world and its author achieved international fame almost over night. The whole movement was essentially religious, and the essence of its preaching was the iniquity of private property in land.

Then came a change. A materialistic tone gradually pervaded the movement and an increasing emphasis was laid upon the fiscal programme and less and less upon the anti-poverty crusade. The most notable figure under the new regime was Thomas G. Shearman, who gave us the name "Single Tax."

Those who find a cause for the change in the direction of the movement of individuals or in the unfortunate adoption of the term "Single Tax" are alike mistaken. To quote Mr. Wallis: "Historical movements are never altered in their direction by mere terms nor yet by the work of individuals, however talented." A new name or a new leader merely gives expression to some underlying tendency. The opinion of the writer is simply that democracy proceeds not at a steady pace, but by a series of waves, each of which breaks farther inland. The "fiscal" period merely represents the trough of the wave.

However, a partial explanation may be found in the fact that George's first message was rejected by the churches which were thoroughly under the thumb of Special Privilege. Naturally, a corresponding hostility arose on the part of the Georgeites toward organized orthodoxy and spread until the two were wholly out of sympathy with each other.

It is, however, important to note that George himself remained true to his religious message and that the great leaders of the movement, even during the fiscal period, were men of deep religious feeling

whether or not in sympathy with the church as an organization or even with Christianity itself. The writer of course uses the word religion in its proper sense and without any theological significance. Yet it is a plain matter of history that in spite of the views of George, Post, Johnson and other leaders, the propaganda gradually took on a worldly aspect which made it seem foreign to the interests of religion.

This contrast between the spiritual atmosphere of Progress and Poverty and the materialistic tone of the Single Tax movement made a profound impression upon the young Louis Wallis when he became interested in land reform in the nineties. He was struck by the way in which many Henry George men calmly assumed that they could ignore the greatest force in human history—the religious instinct. He saw the influence of religious feeling in the advance of democracy during the Reformation, in the struggle against the absolutism of the Stuarts and in the fight for the abolition of slavery, and he felt that if the Single Tax movement were to succeed, it must return to its early religious associations.

After some years of research, Mr. Wallis published through the University of Chicago in 1902 an article entitled "The Capitalization of Social Development,"\* in which he declared for the Single Tax of Henry George. This article was followed by others which culminated ten years later in the publication of a book, also through the University of Chicago, entitled "Sociological Study of the Bible" (1912). This volume attained a circulation and has enlisted the interest and sympathy of steadily increasing numbers of ministers, theological students and professors throughout the world. Professor Troeltsch, of Heidelberg, immediately hailed it as "blazing the path which theological research must follow if the history of religious ethics is to be understood."

In consequence of the publicity gained through this book, Mr. Wallis availed himself of many invitations to speak in churches on "Religion and the Social Problem," has followed this theme with a second address on "The Land Problem and How to

Solve It." Without exception those who come in contact with this new method of approach to the Single Tax perceive its advantages. Kansas City, Baltimore and Chicago alike testify to its value.

Of course there must be a reason for the present acceptance of a message which was rejected thirty years ago. This reason Mr. Wallis finds in the "Higher Criticism." He points out that the publication in 1878 by a young German professor named Wellhausen of a book called "Geschichte Israels," was the starting point for a movement which is to reconcile the Church to democracy.

This "Higher Criticism" encountered fierce opposition in the eighties and nineties, and clergyman or theological professor who ventured to endorse even mildly the views of Wellhausen was summarily removed by some standpat board of trustees who invariably regarded the old order in Church and State as sacred.

The immediate result was to close the doors of the Church to critical methods and conclusions. This, however, was not to last and at present the "Higher Criticism" is firmly entrenched not only in the seminaries but in thousands of pulpits. In fact, the younger clergy are far more liberal than their congregations.

Mr. Wallis points out that this is the force which is to reconcile the Church to Single Tax. He shows in his book that the critical method goes through a literary stage at first and then a historical one and finally proceeds to Sociology. Hence the title "Sociological Study of the Bible." This book sets a model for historians in that it shows that all history revolves around the land problem. It shows that the terrible economic pressure of the land problem transformed the original idea of Jehovah (Yahweh) as a mere tribal god into that of a God of Universal Justice.

These ideas are of course, at first thought, startling, not only to conventional minds, but to those of Single Taxers as well. Our movement has drifted so far away from the views of Henry George that the idea of associating Single Tax with religion is repugnant to most Single Taxers.

Religion, however, Mr. Wallis insists, is such a primitive and natural instinct that

\*Amer. Jour. Soc.

he who ignores it as an instrument of economic salvation is unconsciously playing the game for Special Privilege. While the Church is not necessarily synonymous with religion, yet it satisfies the religious craving for such a large proportion of our population that the institution itself cannot be ignored, any more than the labor union can be ignored in discussing a labor problem.

The Single Tax propaganda must return to its primitive principles and in the new "Back to Henry George" movement there is no more fertile field than the seminaries and churches where the higher criticism has blazed the way. If we take advantage of it, fresh triumphs await the movement toward fundamental Democracy. For this reason we bespeak the co-operation of all fundamental Democrats for Louis Wallis and his colleagues.

HUGH REID, Secretary,  
Illinois Single Tax League.

#### "GEORGISM" IN GRANADA.

(From Antonio Albendin's *Impuesto Unico*  
—Single Tax—published in Malaga, Spain)

On Sunday, May 16, was held in the Alhambra Theater of this city (Granada, Spain), a meeting organized by the workmen of the Catholic Clubs of the City, to commemorate the Encyclical of Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," which drew out the reply of Henry George, "The Condition of Labor."

The meeting was presided over by Canon Don Luis Lopez Doriga, a professor and Secretary of the Archbishopric.

Speeches were made by the representatives of the various clubs, who unanimously condemned the Socialism of Karl Marx, on the ground that what it proposes would but substitute one tyranny for another. After other speakers had been heard, the president summed up the discussion. The following report of his address we reprint from the *Defensor de Granada*.

"The learned Secretary of the Archdiocese rises to sum up the discussion, stating that he will be very brief in view of the lateness of the hour."

"He declares himself very greatly pleased to preside, for the fifth time, at this festival of Catholic workers, because it gives him, the opportunity to promise, upon his honor, to continue working for a new organization of society."

"He pronounces the existing social organization unjust and unchristian, inasmuch as *passi passum* with the progress of that organization, poverty is intensified. If that organization were not unjust, this poverty would not exist."

"Do you believe," he exclaimed, "that pauperism is an essential feature of civilization? Shall we not be able to abolish poverty? Yes."

"Poverty cannot be traced to nature as its cause; poverty is not an effect decreed by God, for that would imply that God had been impotent to prevent it. Poverty is not the work of God, it is the work of the human will, and it is incumbent on us to prevent it. To make more available for all, the opportunities for (productive) labor, would be one way. If the opportunities for labor were abundant, there would be neither poverty nor pauperism."

"Is it possible for all the men living in the world to have work? Yes. Labor is ordained by God; it is necessary for the life of the body; a condition to the achievement of our ultimate aims."

"He (the speaker) declares that the conditions of production are in the hands of the few, who are not willing to exploit them (adequately).

"We should punish those who will not work, and reward the producers; but this is the exact contrary of what is done by the existing social system, which penalizes the producer by imposing upon him heavier taxation than that imposed upon him who holds vacant lots, uncultivated fields, unutilized lands."

"He says that for the first time he is making public announcement of his opinion upon this subject: to wit, the only way to prevent this state of things, is to abolish all taxation upon the fruits of labor, and levy a single tax upon the land."

"He cites the case of the lots upon the Gran Via (an important avenue in Granada) which are still vacant; notes the greatly