

Not then, therefore, is everything done by state or national government beneficial to land values. Despite anything we may say in favor of limiting taxation to land values, our national craze for war must be paid for by industry.

Palo Alto, Calif.

JACKSON H. RALSTON.

OH, MASSACHUSETTS, THERE SHE WALLOWS!

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

The legislative-amendment proposal of Jackson H. Ralston, as set forth in your May-June issue, prompts the following statement. Those who have read Mr. Ralston's proposal will recall that he believes Massachusetts is "the ideal State of the whole Union" in which to wage a legislative programme on tax reform.

Massachusetts long has been termed the "State of Mind" by the facetiously inclined who like to poke fun at our highbrows and educational institutions, and the sad truth is that the sacred cod's state of mind is very ordinary, despite the old-time belief that fish as food makes superior brains. For four years (1925-1929) I sat as a member of the Massachusetts Legislature, representing the 11th Bristol District. As a result of my observation of thousands of legislative petitions I think that very, very few Bay State legislators, or their constituent petitioners, eat fish. In other words, intellectual Massachusetts is as good but no better than any other State.

Many years ago, about 1866, the Massachusetts Legislature enacted a "betterment tax" law which specifically provides that public improvements may be financed by assessing the unearned increment due to such improvements; consequently our State long has had the very legislation needed to save itself from financial ruin. Our people are so accustomed to the presence of this betterment tax law that the law has lost its significance except in connection with the few public services to which it is timidly applied—i. e., as to assessments for sidewalks, street sprinkling and one or two other detail services. It seems to be a common human weakness to fail to see some things which are directly before the eyes. Only yesterday I was searching for a five-foot rule which I finally found in my left hand. I did not lose my pencil because for some reason I knew all the time that it was in my right hand.

If we of Massachusetts should launch a programme for legislative amendments on tax laws we might be frustrated by a keen-witted legislator informing us that such legislation already existed in the form of the betterment tax law and our publicity stunt would be nipped in the bud. Of course, it might be a remote chance that a keen-witted legislator exists who understands the relationship between the proposed legislation and the existing betterment tax law; consequently we might "get away with it" and succeed in putting it onto the statute books twice. Such things have happened before, because legislators seemingly dislike the work of searching records. Research work presents no opportunity for spectacular publicity which politicians must have in order to attract votes, and for this reason we find these veneered statesmen annually presenting bills for doles, unemployment insurance, old age pensions, sales taxes, soft drink taxes, cigarette taxes, etc., without any search of historical records which would show the impracticability of such schemes as tried in other States and countries.

For the past two or three years Massachusetts has had a special legislative committee, comprising lawyers and real estate "experts," delving into Massachusetts' taxation muddle. The gist of the final report is that "many millions of dollars of wealth" are annually escaping the personal property tax in this State. Using the State records I have estimated this untaxed (?) wealth as being about eighteen billions of dollars. This fact, and others, I have repeatedly presented to audiences and to the press, but Massachusetts' weekly murders and racketeering command more attention. I addressed the first meeting of this special committee and urged the taxation of the unearned increment. Prior to this activity I appeared before the legislative Ways and Means Committee and made similar recommendations. If I ever again serve as a legislator, which I may do if Al Smith does not again upset

the Republican candidacies in this State with his free beer, free lunch and free air platform, I shall continue to press the point.

Perhaps this brief statement will suffice to disillusion Mr. Ralston and his readers on Massachusetts' superior state of mental fertility.

Fall River, Mass.

THOMAS N. ASHTON.

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

We never are going to get anywhere talking Single Tax. Single Tax is a remedy, but what is the disease? Not business depression. Business depression is a symptom. The disease lies deeper. It lies in land monopoly and the constantly increasing tribute demanded for access to natural resources.

It is the Land Question, therefore, that should be harped on first, last and all the time. Never mind the remedy. It need hardly be discussed at all. First convince the people that there IS a Land Question, and that it must be settled before we can have permanent prosperity, and they will then be interested in the remedy. But until they can grasp the connection between land monopoly and business depressions, until they can see how the inflation of land values must necessarily choke business to death, it will be useless to talk to them about taxes.

Houston, Tex.

P. W. SCHWANDER.

ADVICE TO HENRY GEORGE CONGRESS

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

Now that the Single Tax National Convention will soon be here, a few suggestions may not be inappropriate.

In the first place I trust that the convention will inspire Single Taxers throughout the country with the burning truth that only by their initiative and concerted actions can there be hope for any material results.

However enthusiastic we may be, we are apt to fall into the heresy of economic determinism. We may rationalize this dark heresy and denominate it social evolution; but such a belief tends to have the same physiological action upon the mind as do *opium religionis* and narcotics. Such a belief soothes us into a mental quietude, which finds most of its outlet in such trite expressions as the following: "So logical a system as the one I advocate is bound to come eventually, even if unaided!"

But history teaches the tragic lesson that there can be no socio-economic salvation by faith alone. An examination of history discredits Marx' famous conception of history as an impersonal flux of facts and events, in which human beings (from the genius to the non-entity) play but a very minor role.

Instead, history is a vital drama, wherein human beings play an all-important part. Even if the world be but a stage, the players must determine the nature and denouement of the drama. The voluntary abolition of slavery in America would never have come to pass, or at least would have been long delayed, had it not been for the human effort of a few determined men and women who felt the injustice of slavery.

I do not mean to imply, however, that events and facts play but an indifferent part in evolution. But we must not think of evolution as if it were a sort of *elan vital* permeating social progress. Evolution is not the cause of events and facts but merely a description of such phenomena as they are manipulated by human effort. If there is such a thing corresponding to the *elan vital*, it is human effort personified. In a word, what is termed socio-economic evolution comprehends merely the accidents of time.

These accidents of evolution are important in the sense that they furnish opportunities for and the requisite stimulation of the free play of human endeavor. This interpretation colors such phrases as "the fullness of time," etc., and gives them some significance. In all probability the American colonies would never have revolted from the mother country had England been less harsh in her political treatment of the colonies. (Canada has very little desire to revolt.) In this respect,

harsh tyranny acted as a suggestion as well as a spur to our brave forefathers, but the decisive factor was the human equation brought into play.

But unaided facts and events will not shape themselves into social progress. In India, today, there is sufficient excuse for revolt, but human effort there is not organized sufficiently to rise to the opportunity.

The lesson for Single Taxers is that the time is ripe for the acceptance of Henry George's philosophy. The serious world-wide industrial depressions, and the universal unrest which now prevails, afford the right psychological state of mind for selling the Single Tax idea. But we must not forget that the time is also ripe for communism, fascism, or even a lapse into slavery, accordingly as human effort colors the opportunity. But Single Taxers should make this their motto: Now is the accepted time.

This brings us up to the second point. Regardless of how opportunistic the facts and events may be, if there is not sufficient effort to manipulate these phenomena they will cease to be an opportunity.

Single Taxers must make the supreme effort to put across Henry George's philosophy. The convention should determine upon some plan of concerted action, so that all the world may know how we stand. I personally should prefer a plan which would have for its purpose the immediate governmental collection of the annual economic rent. But whatever plan is adopted, we should make a determined effort to carry it into execution.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

JOHN C. RHODES.

MR. TIDEMAN REPLIES TO OUR REVIEWER

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

In the March-April number of your paper Mr. B. W. B. has a kind review of my "Radicalia," but wants to know how I can include four factors in the production and distribution of wealth, and even can assert that Government's power of taxation has something to do with it? His challenge is a direct call for answer.

Well, if Finance takes one part of the proceeds of production, along with Land Monopoly, Capital and Labor, does that make it a factor in the equation? If not, what term or word should be used? Of course, the money monopoly should be terminated; so should the land monopoly, but they are anything but that now. As for the Government's power of taxation, that certainly has something to do with the people's economy when it takes about \$100 a year per head from the wealth producers (\$500 per family) in order to secure more than twice the total of that for a small group of non-producers. I think Single Taxers and some other people can and do understand that part.

The critic appears to have misunderstood the book and placed it in the wrong category. It is not philosophy, nor an attempt to demonstrate a three-cornered theory. Not as academic as that. It is just some lessons in the technic of political economy as that performs and works out in the system of our day, and also as it may be made to work by a simplification of its machinery.

To me, a mechanical engineer, the economic system appears as a vast living machine in which individuals and groups are working, all in co-operation, producing and distributing the various kinds of wealth and service that civilized life requires. In "Radicalia" I have endeavored to show how the wheels go round and the levers move, and the how and why the machinery, every now and then, becomes clogged up with wealth it can not distribute and deliver to those whose labor entitles them to it, until the motion all but stops and the producers stand helpless and poverty stricken among abundance of wealth that their labor has produced for them, and production capital, that their labor and skill have created, stands idle and themselves separated from it. Worst of all, the land with its limitless resources, is preempted and held at prices that do not admit of profitable use except with massed capital that is beyond their reach or control. It is also shown how, by slight alteration and simplification, the present machinery may be made to work smoothly, efficiently and uninterruptedly to everybody's comfort and satisfaction. I believe that is

the way the subject must be taught if it is to become intelligible and interesting to the mass of workers and voters, whose minds are trained to think on the concrete and feel in the abstract. Others may do it better, if they will prepare themselves adequately.

Single Tax should not be treated as a dogma. A dogma is a petrified concept that bars further research and progress. Political economy is a living science. No branch of science is yet finished or shows any promise of ever becoming so. To this rule political economy is no exception. The whole world is in process of evolution. That means life. Of the living things on this earth man is the unfinished species. So are his institutions. Evolutionary progress consists largely of elimination.

Fisk, Mo.

S. TIDEMAN.

VANCE COOKE REPLIES TO CLEVELAND PRESS

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

A recent editorial in the *Cleveland Press* suggests that we need a Joseph to regulate our productions and distributions. I wonder. Joseph took advantage of a famine to relieve the people first of their money, then of their live stock, then of their lands. He then "removed them . . . from one end of the border of Egypt even unto the other end thereof," proclaiming arrogantly, "I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh." A fine solution that for the people!

True, in what may have been "benevolent despotism," he let them work the land for the very modest rent of 20 per cent, but like all benevolent despotisms, it did not last, for "there arose a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph."

Doesn't it seem as if Moses might be a better deliverer than Joseph, for Moses (translating Jehovah as was his wont) proclaimed, "And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity."

It had taken Moses forty years to get the children of Israel out of the wilderness—a very small wilderness—but it had not been time wasted, for he had learned that in order to establish a nation, the land, the source of all wealth, must be safeguarded against monopoly.

More than forty years ago there arose among us a later Moses, who bore the name of Henry George. If we had followed him we would not now be in our present wilderness. The *Press* says "no solution is now in sight." If the *Press* means no sudden solution, quite right. But we do not have to go back to Joseph for the solution, but only to Moses—only to our modern Moses, Henry George. It may be another forty years' wandering, but we may just as well start now out of the wilderness by following Henry George.

Cleveland, O.

EDMUND VANCE COOKE.

NEWS NOTES AND PERSONALS

A RECENT inquirer in *Queries and Answers* in the *New York Times* asked for the poem of Ernest Howard Crosby, "Life and Death." He was answered by a number of readers. Some of our readers are familiar with the poem, the first stanza of which reads:

"So he died for his faith. That is fine—
More than most of us do.
But say, can you add to that line
That he lived for it, too."

AT A special meeting of the Manhattan Single Tax Club it was resolved that the club, in view of the enlarged scope of its operations, call itself the Single Tax Society of America. Fuller details will follow.

THE *Diario Socialista Independiente* of Buenos Aires reprints the recent address of Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia, on Henry George.

THERE is no more active letter writer in the Single Tax movement than Harold Sudell, whose communications to the *Philadelphia Record*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and other newspapers meet the eye repeatedly. He has addressed a letter to Governor Pinchot of Pennsylv-