

ADDRESS OF RAYMOND ROBINS.

AT THE BANQUET OF THE SINGLE TAX CONFERENCE N. Y. CITY NOV. 19TH, 1908.
 REPORTED EXPRESSLY FOR THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

Mr. Toastmaster and Friends:—

I am glad to talk to you for a little while tonight. I want what I shall say to be taken, as it were, as the remarks of an itinerant Single-Taxer. I shall begin by saying that I am always sorry when I find Single-Taxers wasting time over each others definitions. This is competing with the Socialists at a point where they have the advantage. There are fifty-seven different varieties of Socialists, each having his definitions all worked out accounting for everything from the fall of Adam to the end of the world. (Laughter) When it comes to definitions all properly dovetailed and hitched together, the economic-interpretation of-history-surplus-value-revolutionary-Socialists has got us all "beat a block." Let's don't trouble about him and let's not try to beat him at his own game. Now I know that accurate thinking is worth while, but I doubt if splitting hairs is. There are some Single Taxers, and some are among my best friends, who have a curious winning way of making folks hate them, just because they stand so strongly for their particular statement of the truth. Now particular statements of the truth are necessary, but we don't need to make them work overtime. (Laughter)

There is another matter of which our Toastmaster has spoken so wisely. One great trouble with Single Taxers is that they think too little of themselves. (Laughter) Sometimes when I hear them talk I am reminded of Moses. You remember when Moses finished telling everything he and God had done for the world, of how he had run the whole people of Israel and written the laws and named the Judges and annointed the Priests and damned everybody that did not agree with him, he then concludes "and Moses was the meekest of men." You feel it just must have been true. (Laughter).

Now I want to talk a little about something that was said a long time ago by another Jew. He was a Single Taxer. He did not say it that way, but his principle of human freedom and individual responsibility can only be realized by social justice, and social justice can only be achieved through the Single Tax. I mean Jesus of Nazareth. He had something to say of people that cared so much for the letter that they forgot the spirit. I think that most of us need to remember this once in a while, and some of us need to think of it all the time. (Laughter).

Consider with me a moment. Some of the elect of our faith would not admit for a second that LaFollette in Wisconsin and Mark Fagan in Jersey were working for the Single Tax. And yet these two men moving along a step at a time have laid the battle lines in those two States in such manner that the outcome of both those struggles is nothing less than the shifting of the burdens of government from opportunity to monopoly, from labor to privilege. Neither of these men have used the Single Tax branding iron. They have not said Single

Tax once in their campaigns, but each is leading the cohorts of progress under the banner of "just taxation." Now what is the meaning of "just taxation?" Does it not mean that the burdens of the community shall be placed upon those values that the community creates? And in practice how does this "just taxation" work out? It works out everywhere in increasing the charges upon franchise and monopoly rights and in decreasing the charges upon labor and opportunity. (Applause), Is it not true that LaFollette in Wisconsin has done just this thing, and that Fagan in Jersey City has done just this thing? Why friends, it is only within the last year that the greatest living Single Taxer and politician has become orthodox. I have heard not a few complaints against Tom Johnson because of his heresies and his waste of time on street car franchises and other side issues. This, my friends, is the big obstruction in the path of the Single Tax in America. So many of us always wait to see the brand. We walk by sight, not by faith. We are very much in the condition of St. Peter when he wanted to "go fishing and prayed for deliverance from his friends," We can lick our enemies, but some of our friends are hopeless. (Laughter).

Now the thing I am interested in is that we should be able to know the spirit without seeing the letter. If we apprehend the big facts and understand the forces that are really working our way; if we watch what really gripes the heart and imagination of the people, then we will be satisfied to get into line and pull or push even if our leaders don't cry Single Tax every minute. And what is the real test for a Single Taxer. It is the old test for life everywhere. He will take life as he finds it and interpret his faith in living ways to living men. He will reproduce opinion in his community that makes for social justice. Action and reproduction are the two great tests of a living faith. (Applause). Purdy is a *live* Single Taxer. Purdy goes ahead and does wonderful work without saying anything about it and gets a report printed and distributed that contains a whole arsenal of argument and will carry conviction for the wisdom of taxing land values rather than improvements as would nothing else we could say or do. Macfarlane is a *live* Single Taxer. You don't know Mac. but I'll tell you something of his work in Illinois. He had a little bill to provide for taking public opinion upon questions of public policy by an advisory referendum. It was the thin end of the wedge for social justice in Illinois. Mac. went to a gentleman who had been speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives when some of the worst legislation our State ever enacted was passed. This gentleman was then in the "down and out" class. He wanted to "break into" the legislature again. He claimed to have had a change of heart. Mac. got his agreement to father this little public policy bill in exchange for radical support at the polls. He was elected and secured the passage of the Illinois Public Policy Bill. This bill has been the foundation of all radical action in Illinois since its adoption. (Applause).

Now this is the way we have to work in this human world. We have to work with folk who have ifs and ands and buts and without stopping to get them converted to the full gospel, but giving them a chance to grow in grace as

they work from day to day. In other words, the live Single Taxer is either busy starting something or pushing something already started. Any man here tonight can go home tomorrow and take hold of some measure or movement in his own town or State and working side by side with the average man can begin to change the opinions of men and change the credence of his community toward social justice. Don't be too particular about the brand, Have you forgotten about Baker? Baker started something in Congress! It got going pretty fast and hot—so hot that he couldn't hold it—but the spirit is marching on. The President and Congress have enacted anti-pass legislation since that memorable day when "anti-pass" Baker rose in his seat and denounced the bribery of the national legislature by the "pass system." What is it that has turned legislators all over this country into advocates of 2 cent fare on railroads? Just "anti-pass" Baker starting something one quiet day in Washington. Now "anti-pass" is not Single Tax, yet two cent fares effect a change in the incidence of taxation, and if you can look deep enough and see far enough there never was a Single Tax speech made in America equal to the "anti-pass speech" of Robert Baker in the Congress of the United States. (Great applause).

Now the Single Tax as such, as a dogma of taxation, as an intellectual statement of political philosophy, does not mean much to the man in the street. It is a frightful phrase and is more terrible to the Group of Toil who own homes and to simple farmer folk, than any other phrase in American politics. Yet the *things* the Single Tax *means* in practice are just the dearest desires of their hearts, and they are willing to do yeoman service for those *things* to-morrow if you will interpret your formula in the terms of the common life and language of the world.

We are intellectuals. The Single Taxers are the most interesting group in the social disorder. We are proud of our logic, proud of our keenness for analysis and accuracy in statement. And all these things are desirable, but they don't make up for our lack of common sense and apprehension of the fundamental quality under diverse currents in the modern political movement. Neither do they answer for sympathetic understanding of the heart and hope of the working world. Intellect as such has never been very powerful with the great mass of mankind. When it comes to human action—heart movements are bigger than head movements. Men in the mass don't think things with careful discrimination. They have always refused to do that. Men by and large get a feeling that certain measures or certain men are right and certain other men or measures are wrong. This feeling of being right gets possession of them and controls their action and they go out and vote for the man or the measure they feel to be right. (Applause).

Statements of abstract truth that will satisfy an Intellectual utterly and give him great joy might be made every day for a thousand years and the man on the street would never know what you were talking about. You can form a society and meet and discuss this abstract truth every Sunday afternoon if you wish. You will have 23 when the day is fine, when you have a speaker

of national reputation you will have 24 and when there is great excitement and you call a mass meeting you will have 25 tried and true Single Taxers ready to pronounce judgment. You reconvert each other meeting after meeting and go away happy with a great glow in the brain, and nobody else knows that you are alive. (Laughter.)

Something was said to-night about charity work and charity workers. I want to say that you waste all the time you spend in sneering at any honest social work or worker. Whenever you find a man genuinely interested and helpful in relieving the effects of our social disorder, you have found a half educated Single Taxer. Any person interested and trying to do the square thing is on the right road. Instead of kicking him for not being one of us, pat him on the back and help him forward. Don't think that because this fellow is only doing red cross work that he has a soft snap. Picking up the wounded between the lines of the industrial battle is a job that many fellows that can sneer wouldn't have the courage to do for a day. I have done more or less work with the charity folk of this country for the past seven years. Some of the King's men and women are in that group and while we are talking here to-night, some of them are studying how to change from bailing out the boat to stopping the leak. All over this country they are working on the problem of industrial and social human waste, and if you ever happen to look into any literature except your own—and this is sometimes worth while, strange as it may seem—you will find in the proceedings of the last National Conference at Minneapolis some straight doctrine going down to the roots of our social wrongs.

Now a word about the ministers. I have hope for them—hope even for the clergymen of this country. There are a number of real men in the pulpits of America who are mightily dissatisfied with the plutocratic church. And there are thousands of men and women in the pews that are just as dissatisfied as the preachers. Here is one of the great social forces lying dormant. And let me say that it is my deliberate judgment we will never get a popular movement along the line of industrial freedom until we have thawed out this refrigerated Christianity in the churches of America. It must be thawed out and made to function on the human side of this great struggle. Here is a storehouse of social consciousness that the average Single Taxer is inclined to pass by, or stop to denounce, just because it is held in cold storage. Let us rather turn on the electric current of real discipleship made manifest by genuine service for God and the people, and these men and women will take up the battle cry for industrial freedom all over the land. The Christian men and women in this nation are our rightful inheritance. The doctrine of Jesus and the Prophets proclaiming individual and collective morality and responsibility, is maintained and vindicated in our doctrine alone of all fundamental theories of social order in the modern world. "Mine, your and ours," this simple formula which recognizes individual natural rights as well as collective rights, harmonizes with Christian doctrine and philosophy and will vindicate both the law of Moses and the "Sermon on the Mount." (Applause.) But, you ask,

“How is this Christian consciousness in the church to be released for social justice? Why doesn't it go a little deeper and faster? What is stopping it?” Let me answer, if I can. Our doctrine has a way of not being expressed in the terms of the common life and understanding of the people and the people have a way of not caring about what you say unless you talk their language. As illustrating my meaning. I know a number of women in this country—mothers of homes and eager for the welfare of this nation—who are deeply concerned about child labor, but are utterly indifferent or prejudiced regarding the Single Tax. Yet we can take the story of child labor exploitation and in every line of the record of wronged and disinherited childhood, interpret the need for free opportunity and discover the remedy in the taxation of ground rents.

Again, I know a number of earnest men that are greatly concerned for old age pensions and who care nothing for the taxation of land values. Yet the need for old age pensions comes from restricted opportunity and resulting low wages and lack of employment and lends itself to the living interpretation of the philosophy of Henry George.

Now look at this picture! See those back stairs of a rear tenement opening on that alley on the west side of Chicago. See those two children. That boy is ten, and that girl, his sister, is twelve years of age. Notice that they are both a little pale and narrow chested—sort of grey blooded—not so bad to look at, but still clearly a little under grade. They came to this country eight years ago with their father and mother, simple red blooded Bohemian peasants, immigrants to this “land of the free and home of the brave.” They were very poor and had to get cheap lodgings, so they took this rear tenement that is all shut in by the taller buildings. The room that these children have slept in for eight years has never known a ray of sunlight, and bad plumbing has kept this dark room plentifully filled with sewer gas. Being poor and ignorant of American business methods, they have eaten their share of lumpy jaw-beef and drank their portion of formaldehyde milk. The poverty of this little home will force these children into industry early. Let us follow them—first the boy, then the girl. He goes to work in a box factory and does very well for two years. Then he got lazy—so the foreman said—and was discharged. When analysed, this laziness was confined to spoiling material after the tenth hour in the day's work of twelve hours. In other words, the hand and eye and muscles of the grey blooded tenement boy did not function accurately after ten hours steady work. He couldn't “make good.” After this he got a job in a can factory. Same hours, less wages and harder work. After some months, he again began to spoil material and was again “fired.” Same cause, eye, hand and muscles didn't react properly after the tenth hour. Then he said to himself, “I will get out of town into the country and then I will do better.” His only chance was to be shipped out with a gang to some casual labor work, lumber camp, railroad barracks, ice camp, etc., etc. He shipped to a lumber camp in western Washington. Nine months out there with bad food and the stories and licence of a lumber camp, and he came back to Chicago

eager for whiskey, women and the gamblers' trance. He did not want to go home. He went to one of the lodging houses in the First Ward. He was registered by one of the alderman's heelers. The boy is then a citizen ready for "repeating" work on election day and has arrived at his status in the social disorder. What of the girl, his sister? She begins work in the basement of a department store. The second rush season's overtime work breaks her down. She loses her job and is home sick for three weeks. Then she gets a job in a nearby sweat shop. Hours are longer and the pay smaller, but she can do the work and she is near home. After a time she gets restless. There is a dance hall nearby, and she goes there one night. She goes again and many times. A nice young man asks her to take a drink and tells her about wine suppers downtown. After some time she goes with him once and then again. After this last supper, she is ready to kill herself, but he suggests that she can now make thirty dollars a week and perquisites at—French Lilly's. She goes and is swallowed up in the underworld. But on election day, her brother votes for the alderman, and the fifty cents he gets for his vote was part of the money French Lilly paid the alderman's go-between for police protection so she could run her house in peace. Then this alderman will use his power in the city council to prevent the enforcement of the sanitary laws, and will protect the landlord that owns this rear tenement so that new generations of grey blooded children may come from it to be exploited and disinherited while the Group of Plunder fattens on the prostitution of manhood and womanhood, on the ruin of citizenship and virtue, (Applause.) Now, my friends, there is no mother, no father, no decent citizen in America who can not be interested in this boy and girl. This endless chain of human degradation is in operation in every industrial city of America at this hour. Now listen! You could not keep that unsanitary tenement on the soil, if only land values were taxed. You could not sell diseased food if the people could afford to buy better, and they could afford to buy better, if they were not robbed of free opportunity by land monopoly. You could not buy child labor if parents were not pressed by want or fear of want, and freedom of natural opportunity will remove that pressure. Men would refuse to be exploited in casual labor gangs if they could get steady jobs, and all men could get steady jobs, if you would remove the taxes from labor and put them upon monopoly and privilege. You can not buy men's votes if they have a real stake in this Republic, and they would have a real stake, if the natural resources of this nation were free for the use of its living men. Overtime and underpay thieves of every place and name would go out of business if jobs hunted workers instead of workers hunting jobs, and jobs will hunt workers under the Single Tax. (Applause.)

Now friends, what do all these illustrations mean? They mean that our problem is one of *interpretation*. We must use the living issues of each hour and of all hours to portray the truth in our philosophy of social justice, this truth for which we live and for which our great leader died.

Here now, at this time of industrial paralysis due to over speculation, we have a great opportunity. A little while ago a group of steel manufacturers in

this country sat down and made \$300,000,000 over night. They made this money by capitalizing the future value of the ore lands of the country and charging labor for the payment of interest on those three hundred millions for the next fifty years. Fraudulent charges of this nature upon the industry of our country became so great, that in a time of good crops and plentiful demand the burden has become too heavy and our entire industrial system is paralysed, while we tremble in the throes of a widespread panic. And thus even under a Republican full dinner pail administration, the laws of Political Economy hold true. The full dinner pail has become as empty under Roosevelt as it became under Cleveland, and the tramp of the army of the unemployed sounds throughout the land. The Republican Soup-Wagon has replaced the Republican Prosperity-Wagon and starvation and idleness knock at the door of a million men able and willing to work. Tonight in this richest country in the world, the bread line lengthens in every city of the land. And the question in my heart is this: Have we the sense to use the opportunity for interpretation of our great truth that is offered by the conditions in this country at this hour? (Great applause),

I sometimes find Single Taxers who make the mistake the old Masters of the world made. They retire into their superior intellectual fortress saying: "Cursed be these people who know not the law." Not so my friends. We can only do this work required of Justice by and with the people. We can not do much lifting from above. We must get underneath. At election times we all agree that the people rule. Then all parties recognize that their fate is in the hands of the average man. And just now, when great financial and industrial recession is disclosing the depths of hard times and the bog of enforced idleness, we see the truth again. Only the other day a card in four languages appeared on the front page of one of the great papers of this metropolis. When translated and interpreted it amounted to this, "Mr. Hod Carrier and Mr. Ditchdigger and Mrs. Scrubwoman please dont draw out your savings or we will all go to financial smash." Times such as these disclose the foundations of our financial system, and it is seen to rest on the earnings and savings—the real money—of the working world. And just as the political and financial pillars of this Republic rest on the bent backs of the Group of Toil so rest its moral and spiritual foundations as well. (Applause).

When partisan mists are dispelled and partisan prejudices are allayed it is clear that there are just two groups facing each other in this country to-day. One is the Group of Toil and the other is the Group of Plunder. One creates wealth and the other takes wealth. One earns a living and don't get it, the other gets a living and don't earn it. One works without living and the other lives without working. One breeds the surfeited child of privilege and the other the disinherited child of labor. One gets much for nothing and the other gets little for everything. One gives labor and gets poverty, the other gives idleness and gets luxury. The natural by product of the one is the box car tramp and the prostitute who sells her body for bread, of the other, the automobile bum and the prostitute who sells herself for a foreign title or a million a

year. These two groups cannot be long maintained by the same country in the face of an advancing civilization. All over this nation, men are taking sides in this great contest between greed and citizenship. The fight has many angles, and here it rages on one aspect of the issue and there another, but through the din and dust of the conflict if you have eyes to see, you can discern on the one hand the gaunt faces of the Group of Toil and on the other the sinister faces of the Group of Plunder.

Now I want to speak for a few moments of another point of attack. There are a number of good people in this country that are afraid of Socialists. They do not know just why, but neither do people know just why they are afraid of Ghosts. Socialists frighten white folks up North and Ghosts frighten colored folks down South. (Laughter). Now I am not afraid of either Ghosts or Socialists. In fact I consider them two of the most harmless animals in the whole menagerie. But the fact that many people are afraid of the increase of Socialists is another opportunity for the interpretation of the Single Tax. Every thoughtful man knows that the only *answer* to Socialism is the Single Tax. In England this truth has at last reached the Prime Minister and a bill for the taxation of land values will be an issue in the next parliament. (Applause) This fear of a new tyranny over the life of man can be removed in just one way, and this way is to provide industrial freedom in terms of liberty and social justice, in other words, the application of the Single Tax. You can take the great historic struggles of civilization and they all bear witness to the truth of our philosophy and the failure of the principles of Socialism. For what did our fathers labor and suffer and die fighting for a thousand years? Freedom of worship, freedom for the human mind! Did they find out the exact religious truth and establish that truth over the minds of men? Not so. They finally found freedom and social justice in that great struggle when they agreed to give each human soul the free opportunity to work out for itself the sublime problems of the origin and end of life. And until this issue was settled and settled right there was no other matter of much concern to mankind. Then our fathers entered upon the next great problem of civilization. This contest was for personal political freedom. The history of this struggle is the history of the modern world for two hundred and fifty years. When the Serfs in Russia and the Negroes in the Southern States were freed, this second battle was finally won for the western world. Not any specific kind of freedom, not any necessary form of government, but the principle of government by the consent of the governed was established forever. Now we are engaged in the third great struggle of the human race, a world wide struggle for industrial freedom. And this struggle will be won and determined along the old historic line of settlement. It will not be won by a surrender of the gains of the past. It will not be won by accepting the tyranny of the majority over the moral and personal freedom of mankind. We will not surrender the heritage for which our fathers suffered and died for a job in a bureaucratic State and the promise of three meals and a bed. We could have been sure of this much any time by giving up the freedom of our minds or the

freedom of our bodies, but we have preferred to die fighting. These hard won freedoms we shall not surrender. We will rather add to the freedom of the mind and the freedom of the body, the freedom of the land, which alike God gave to each of his children. (Applause) Yes, my friends, the true productive and distributive proposals of Democracy, are in the Single Tax. Written in the history of civilization, written in human hearts, written in the historic hope of mankind in the old Bible is the truth that free land makes free men—and individual freedom under God with equal opportunity to use the earth is the divine law of Social Justice. (Applause).

One thought more. The promise of this Republic was a *great people*, Great men and great classes are an old failure in the history of the world. If Railroad Kings, Lumber Barons, Merchant Princes, and Landlords are the meaning of this nation then this nation will be without meaning in the history of civilization. The highest individual genius and achievement belong to the earlier ages of human history. If you seek the greatest architect the world has ever known you will not accept the man who built the skyscraper, but the man who divined the Parthenon; if sculpture be your joy, the broken fragments of Phidias' statues are more beautiful than the unblemished marble of Power's Greek Slave. Should pure oratory be your delight, then Demosthenes' oration for the crown must be accorded the palm and the wreath of laurel. Does this mean that we are a degenerate or ignoble people? Not so. It means that the genius of this Republic is that of a whole great people working out the divine fruits of civil liberty and equal opportunity for all men. It is the genius of average men and women, heirs of a great inheritance of freedom and charged with supreme responsibilities, working out the problems of self-government and social justice for all the nations of the earth. And this, my friends, is the most sublime undertaking of the ages, this making of a commonwealth of free and enlightened people rising from the base to the apex of the social structure—an unbroken testimony of manhood and womanhood in terms of spiritual, political and industrial freedom. (Great Applause).

"THE LAND, WHICH THE LORD THY GOD GIVETH THEE."

For the Review.

By EDWARD HOWELL PUTNAM.

Within a generation hence the Georgian philosophy will prevail throughout the world. The Single Tax propaganda is not yet arrived at the stage where its strength may be consistently measured by instances of its practical application. The question whether or not it has been formally adopted by any government, or political division, either partially or wholly, is not, at this stage, a criterion of its validity, nor is it an important indication of its ultimate economic status.

Henry George's challenge to the world is, in spiritual essence identical with