

## A PLEA FOR LAISSEZ FAIRE

—————  
 BOLTON SMITH IN THE NEW REPUBLIC  
 FOR DEC. 2, 1916.  
 —————

You are doing a great work at a critical time in American history, but I believe it would be even more effective if your pages were not so hermetically sealed to the view of that large body of opinion who believe that the "laissez-faire laissez-passer" policy has never had a genuine and full trial and that it would be a calamity for this country to follow European radicals in seeking refuge in regulation and State control, until the curative power of genuine freedom has been tested.

It is not easy to put what I mean into a few words, without omitting necessary qualifying statements, but relying on your sympathetic comprehension, I will attempt it. The tendency under present conditions for wages to go down to the lowest point at which population will consent to maintain itself constitutes the fundamental justification for trade unionism with all of its results—good and bad. This tendency (of wages to fall under free competition) is explained in the orthodox political economy by the doctrine of diminishing returns. This view seemed also in accord with the view that joy was not of this world and that the division of mankind into masses and classes was a final expression of God's will. This doctrine no longer accords with our religious or social ideals and the doctrine of diminishing returns has for the time being, at any rate, been repealed through the application of science to agriculture and industry. In the animal kingdom, more food means increased numbers; and this tendency to have large families continues even with mankind wherever the child is a source of profit, but is reversed in the families of the well-to-do. There the child is given education and greater opportunity for development and becomes a burden financially and personally. If culture and comfort could be the lot of all there seems reason to believe the danger of excessive population would be entirely overcome.

You will not have failed to notice that I am suggesting nothing less than the possibility that a community may exist in which competition, even among laborers, might not be inconsistent with a scale of wages—rising with every important application of science to production, and really representing the laborers' fair share of the total product. Such a scale of wages would soon make of the laborer the owner of the greater part of the capital of the country; and what more natural than that laborers would invest in the factories in which they work and thereby secure a control of their industry which State socialism would make possible.

I realize that this seems too good to be true and that the wise men of the world have lost the hope of finding evidence of design in social structure or of the reign of law where now all seems confusion. But the kind of world I have suggested would be exactly the one the Father to whom Jesus prayed, would have made. Some of us still believe that is the sort of world we actually are living in—and that the task of man is to cease interfering with the free play of God's laws dealing with the production and distribution of wealth instead of establishing restrictions.

As Columbus went in search of a land he had never seen and finding it, solved for a time, and in an unexpected manner, many of the economic difficulties of Europe, may it not be we can find a solution of much that daunts us by a further reliance on the principles of freedom? I am not suggesting a remedy, but a direction in which it may be worth while for men of good will to look for one.

—————

HON. GEORGE FOWLDS spoke at Patea, New Zealand, on Nov. 14 to a large audience. His subject was, "Land Value Rating." He was introduced by the mayor and was enthusiastically received. There seems to be a greatly awakened Single Tax interest in New Zealand.

—————

WILLIAM A. BLACK, Executive Secretary of the Texas Single Tax League, addressed a number of noon-day luncheons in Dallas during the month of December.