

# The Single Tax Review

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## Current Comment

**WARREN G. HARDING** is now our president. It would be both unfair and ungenerous to judge him at this early date. We have formed impressions of him from the facts of his official career and his public utterances, but he is entitled to a suspension of judgment now that full responsibility is his. He treads a path beset with difficulties, and these will increase rather than diminish as time goes on.

**YOUR** practical politician of the higher type, among whom it is only fair to accord Mr. Harding a place, is an incurable romanticist. Your idealist is usually practical in that he "has a plan." It may not always be a practical plan, but the idealist is at all events willing to test his phrases by facts, while the practical politician either denies or ignores conditions which stubbornly resist the impassioned phrase, the roseate painting, the romantic view.

**INTERNATIONAL** trade, for example, with all its relations, is one of these stubborn things. Yet here in his inaugural message Mr. Harding says: "We must understand that ties of trade bind nations in closer intimacy and none may receive except as he gives." The implication of this Mr. Harding would be the first to deny. For if none may receive except as he gives, then none may give except as he receives, or sell except as he buys. And note that Mr. Harding drops the notion of nations trading, and reverts to the personal pronoun, thus recognizing that all trade, international as well as the other kind, is barter between individuals in the exercise of which operation neither can in any sense be "protected," though one or both may be robbed.

He intimates that "our higher production costs must be reflected in our tariffs on imports." We have been told that the tariff keeps wages high, but here we are told that we need a tariff because wages here are higher than those abroad. This argument is addressed to the employing class, it will be observed; there is another set of arguments for the employed. But what wages are, and what it is that determines them—these stubborn facts against which these alluring theories are shattered—are ignored entirely in Mr. Harding's inaugural. Yet information can be had if he desires it. Because of this we venture to call him an incurable romanticist.

**TO** one enamoured of romance historical facts are apt to take on new appearances. Note the naive spirit of this statement: "It has been proved again and again

that we cannot throw open our markets to the world and maintain American standards of living." When did we throw open our markets to the world? Just at what date and under what administration did this momentous happening occur? Oh, incurable romanticist!

**MR. HARDING** tells us that no altered system will work a miracle. "Any wild experiment always adds to confusion." The conservative and reactionary will forget the adjective, for to him all experiments that would modify the existing order are the wildest kind of suggestion. That others of more progressive mind may nevertheless be reassured, Mr. Harding is careful to say that "opportunity is calling not alone for the restoration, but for a new era in production, transportation and trade." Then there is to be a new era; a new era will call for a change, of course, no "wild" change, and not much of a change, but just enough. Shall we never be through with words that juggle with sense?

**AND** here is the humor of it. The American people were anxious for a "change." But there is no change. Things remain the same; policies are unaltered. The land system, the fiscal system, the tariff system—these are still with us. The cause that reduces wages to the subsistence point, that makes of the mere worker without land or capital a beggar for employment at the hands of those who control the sources of employment,—these the new administration does not propose to change. To do so would be to embark on what Mr. Harding calls a "wild" experiment. No party proposes to change it, save the little group calling itself the Single Tax Party, and the larger but rapidly disintegrating Socialist Party.

**EVERY** four years the American people vote for a "change." They never get it. What they get is a new flood of words and phrases, and a new lot of legislation along the old lines. The only change is a new mass of verbiage. There is a slight difference in the vocabulary of the Democratic and Republican Parties, about the same difference that exists in occasional spelling in Webster and Worcester. But that is all. Both speak the language of privilege—both profess the same adherence to the purest models. There is the difference that exists between the Universalists and the Unitarians, the difference which some wit has thus defined: one sect believes itself too good for God to damn and the adherents of the other that God is too good to damn them, which after all may be a pretty wide difference, though it is difficult to see how either of the two

great political parties can claim immunity under the first, while it is easy to see how both may plead the restraints of a too merciful Providence for their continued existence!

**I**N another column we print a letter from a Michigan subscriber defending Ford from our slap at the eccentric Detroit manufacturer. It may be true, as our correspondent says, that Ford has attacked the evils in both parties in his state. That much is to his credit. But it is very little. For we know that such attacks have not been made on fundamental grounds, since Henry Ford was never fundamental. Condemnation of corruption in political life comes easy. Most people know it. What they do not know are the real causes of such corruption, the social and economic mainsprings from which it emanates. The late Tom L. Johnson carried on a campaign in the city of Cleveland and educated the people there in the knowledge that the political corruption that prevailed was due to the opportunities presented for gambling in public franchises, and in the second place, and to a much greater degree, to the whole unnatural system that gives to private individuals the enormous wealth in land values created by the collective growth and industry of the community. It is of course to be regretted that he did not lay greater and more continued emphasis on the second consideration, but at least he never evaded it, and cannot be charged with that sin

**O**UR quarrel with Mr. Ford, however, is not that he is not fundamental, but that at a time when the world needs friendship and conciliation—very sorely it needs them—he has chosen to fan the embers of a bitter race hatred, and that ridiculous as are some of his contentions, he has done this with the artfulness of a malice that knows no limits. For he does know, as much as he can be said to know anything, that people who hate the Jews, or hate the Japanese, or hate the Irish, or hate the English, or hate the Negro, do not weigh the reasonableness or unreasonableness of any charge that can be made. It is enough with these people whom race snobbery has afflicted, that some eminent person of position shall iterate the charges. They will not stop to ask themselves what kind of corious mentality is behind the maker of the Ford machines. Henry Ford is what Americans call a "big name"—that is, a well advertised name.

**T**HAT a Single Taxer should defend Ford is only illustrative of the fact that a man may call himself a Single Taxer, and know little of the doctrine of love at the base of that philosophy of Freedom which Henry George and Leo Tolstoy taught, and in the acceptance of which we are to that degree their followers. If the Single Tax is nothing more than a fiscal proposition then there is room for hate, of course, but if it is the doctrine of the restoration to all men of their rights to the earth, the great humanizing philosophy of social redemption—then there is no room for hate, no room for silly racial animosities. For we are then face to face with the truth that men are not only

born free and equal, but that if they differ in defects and excellences the good in all predominates, and that Burke was eternally right when he said that against a whole people no true indictment can be found.

## An Unforgotten Author

**I**T is with a great deal of surprise we read an article in *The Literary Review* of the *New York Evening Post* of February 12, entitled "A Forgotten Author," by Ernest G. Draper. The author referred to is Henry George and the work indicated is *Progress and Poverty*.

It seems incredible that Mr. Draper, who shows a genuine admiration for the literary qualities of that work, should nevertheless imagine that it could be listed among forgotten books. So far from this being true, it is today one of the most widely read books in the civilized world. It is the only work on Political Economy by an American author now being read in translation in Germany, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Spain and South America. Even in China a translation has been made which is now being read by the leading publicists of that country. It is the only American book on economics that is being quoted in the debates in the British Parliament. It has had the largest circulation of any American book since Uncle Tom's Cabin.

All this might be true indeed, and yet its present-day popularity have declined. Let us see as to this.

Henry George's principal work is not among the "best sellers." Neither is *The Tale of Two Cities*, *Les Misérables*, or *The Cloister and The Hearth*. The last novel of Harold Bell Wright far outstrips their combined circulation. In the same way some recent volume on economics may displace *Progress and Poverty* for a period. Five or ten years are needed for any sort of comparison. It would be easy to relegate Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, the only work on Political Economy which for sheer genius can be compared with *Progress and Poverty*, to the limbo of forgotten books when compared with some of the more recent books on the same subject, but every intelligent reader knows that it is far from forgotten. The popularity of all great books is not the popularity of the "best seller," or the work that catches the attention of the man who reads everything.

Let us see, however, just where *Progress and Poverty* stands at the minute, and how it circulates at the hands of those who minister directly to the reading public. Before doing so we pause to cite a recent letter from Doubleday, Page & Company, the publishers of Henry George's works, in which they say: "The sale of *Progress and Poverty* continues to be a healthy one year by year."

Public libraries, of which requests have been made for information on this point, report a very general application for *Progress and Poverty*. The conclusion to be drawn from the many letters received from librarians is that the