

THE SINGLE TAX BILL AT ALBANY.

(Extracts from Argument of Hon. George Wallace before the Committee on Taxation, March 22. Mr. Wallace was a former Republican member of the State Legislature. Author of the speech "Cousin Aleck," reprinted from the London *Chronicle*, in *THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW*, on the strength of which Mr. Wallace was elected member of the National Liberal Club and complimented by several members of the government).

Some years ago, when a member of this Legislature, it was my privilege to introduce numerous bills in one session, all of which seemed to me to be in the interest of my constituents. I think that twenty-seven of these bills were passed and all but one or two of them signed by the Governor. In my district this was regarded as a record of great achievement, and on my return home I was greeted with a large reception, a dinner party, etc., all of which were quite unusual in that district. Not underestimating the pleasure derived from a cordial greeting by one's neighbors, it was on mature reflection a matter of sincere regret to me that none of these bills, for which I had worked so hard, would have any noticeable and permanent effect in blessings to my fellow creatures. Not one of them would drown a human sorrow or wipe away a human tear.

Nearly all of these measures were intended to correct the evils of previous legislation. Further study has convinced me that preceding legislation was fundamentally based on wrong principles, and that no amount of legislative tinkering can greatly benefit the human race. Our volumes of session laws are crowded with amendatory legislation. At least three-fourths of this would be unnecessary if we had started right.

In the study of a general bill such as this we must arrive at a reasonable conclusion as to its probable results—what effect it would have, if it became a law, on the prosperity and happiness of the people. Certainly there is room, and also great necessity, for legislation which would lessen the sorrow and suffering and increase the happiness of our fellow creatures.

UNEARNED WEALTH—UNDESERVED POVERTY.

It is an undeniable fact that much of the great wealth in the cities is unearned wealth to those who possess it, and that much of the poverty which exists is undeserved by those who suffer from it. It is also a well settled fact that the accumulation of unearned wealth produces undeserved poverty. They always exist side by side. These facts must result from some fundamental injustice which has crept into our institutions. The expressions "unearned wealth" and "undeserved poverty" reveal some violation of natural justice. If the provisions of this bill would tend to get rid of, or even to modify, these conditions, you can have no higher or holier purpose than to secure the enactment of the bill into law.

WHAT THIS BILL PROPOSES.

But to the bill before you. It is an attempt to reach and cure the sad

conditions referred to. It recognizes that things are wrong because our institutions and laws which produce them are wrong. It discovers the chief causes of these conditions and grapples with them. The wrongs referred to do not come by chance; they result from human acts and laws; they are a disgrace to our State and our pretended civilization. To have tens of thousands of our children going to school partially famished because it is impossible to secure necessary nourishment, while the parents of other children are reveling in the possession of enormous unearned funds, and have a thousand fold more than they can eat or wear, is not civilization at all; it is barbarism.

Official figures for 1908 showed one-seventh of the people who die in Manhattan and the Bronx are buried as paupers. This is also very wide of true civilization.

VALUES ONLY FROM HUMAN LABOR.

Let us consider further that every dollar's worth of value in this unearned wealth has been produced by human labor. Dollars do not grow on wild trees of the forest; they may not be had for the slight trouble of picking them. Dollars represent sweat and toil of brawn and brain. There are no wealth values which have not been produced by the labor and the brains of human beings.

LAND FOR WHICH "OWNERS" HAVE NO USE.

This wrong condition has been brought about by society allowing and encouraging individuals to claim and own land for which they have no use. As population increased, human beings were forced to seek land for habitations and for other use. The State having already parted with its lands to a few thousand individuals—lands designed and fitted by nature for the support and maintenance of millions—the individuals of this increasing population were compelled to apply to private individuals for the right and privilege of living at all. These private owners, having an artificial title to the land, although none of them could trace the title to its Maker, discovered that the land had a value dependent entirely upon human necessities. So they charged their suffering fellow creatures a price for the privilege of using the land which God had made, and for which they had no use themselves, and the greater the number of people, the greater the human necessities, the higher the price. Thus they were enabled to acquire fortunes based entirely on human wants and needs, not on their own industry.

THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN OBTAIATED.

Had the bill before you been enacted into law a century ago this condition could not have arisen. If no taxes had ever been levied on personal property, including structures on land, the Astors would not have been encouraged, they could not have been induced to purchase more land than they required for their homes or for any useful purpose. There would be no object in their buying land only for speculative purposes; all taxes being levied on land, it would be an unprofitable speculation. If they had large fortunes

they would naturally invest them in building operations or industrial enterprises, thus blessing the community instead of having people cursed by the land monopoly under which they now suffer.

NOT YET TOO LATE.

Fortunately it is not yet too late to right this wrong. It is not too late, at least, to start in the right direction as does this bill. The members of this Committee are not yet impervious to the cry of human sorrow. Surely the plaintive groans of those suffering from poverty and starvation do not fall unheeded on your ears. Fortunately there is no constitutional or other legal obstacle to your doing this act of justice to the people. The State has always retained the right of eminent domain; it has retained the right to tax and to exempt from taxes. Those who have title deeds for land, have taken them with their eyes open to the fact that they must hold that land subject to the right of the State to tax it to its full value. In so taxing it the State would not violate any agreement nor any principle of natural justice.

MONOPOLY WOULD DIE THE DEATH.

Enact this bill into law and land monopoly will begin to die the death. The holders of land and land speculators will gradually discover, if they do not realize it at first, that it is not profitable to hold land out of use. Land will thus become cheaper and homes cheaper and more numerous. Cheap lands bless the people in any country; the high price of land is always a curse to a community because it means a cruel "squeeze" on human necessities, a violation of the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

LIBERTY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.

Personally, I worship at the shrine of liberty. I believe in the principle of equal opportunity to all. This is impossible of attainment where land monopoly is permitted. I assume that you gentlemen of the committee, and also a majority of the members of the Legislature, are at heart in favor of the theory of "equal rights to all; special privilege to none." In theory you adopt the God-given principle of *equal opportunity*. Orators and poets have spoken and written of this in glowing terms, but it has never yet been enjoyed by the people of this country. It is their birthright, but they have been disinherited under our system of taxation which fosters accursed monopoly and robs them of the land which the Lord their God gave to them—that is, created for them.

MUST NEW YORK ALWAYS LAG BEHIND?

What is to be said of the great Empire State of New York? Is this great State always to lag behind in the march of events? Must we always wait until forced by the rising sentiments which sets other states aflame? Has this State ever given to civilization an idea enacted into law which would tend to benefit humanity and lift the crown of sorrow and suffering from the brow of men, women and children? England gave to the world Magna Charta,

and Habeas Corpus, and parliamentary government. A lot of Englishmen and sons of Englishmen and Irishmen assembled at Philadelphia in 1776 and promulgated the idea of equal rights to all—the right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. But that was twelve years before the United States came into existence.

NEW YORK'S LEAD IN WEALTH AND POVERTY.

We are now leading the world in per capita wealth, and also leading the world in poverty. That is to say, we are far ahead of any country in this world, in proportion to our population, in the matter of pauperism and the cost of its support. Now let us get ahead of all others in the enactment of justice, to be followed by the gradual abolishment of poverty and the constant increase of blessings and happiness for all the people.

NEW YORK TO THE FRONT.

Will New York never go to the front for humanity? Can't we now take a place in the front ranks of progress and civilization? Let us now do something for suffering, starving humanity. Let us get ahead of all other states in adopting the great principles of justice embodied in the taxation of land alone, and in freeing industry from all taxation.

ADDRESS OF JOSEPH F. DARLING.

(Mr. Darling, who followed Hon. George Wallace, is ex-assistant Attorney General of this State, and a Single Taxer of long standing. He it was who as a young man first brought to Henry George's attention Dove's "Theory of Human Progression.")

In regard to the bill under discussion, the underlying principles of which, your comments upon the argument of Mr. George Wallace show that you understand, I have a few words to add from the standpoint of the general economic situation

The march of privilege has arrived at such a point in this country, that not only has wealth concentrated into a few hands, as the speech of Senator La Follette of March 26, 1908, pointed out, into the hands of a very few men who almost absolutely control industry, prices, and wages, but this control is so constituted, so constructed upon a basis of interwoven special interests, that we have, as the *New York Press* of November, 1908, admits, Socialism in Production already installed, practically speaking, but not Socialism in distribution. I do not need to explain to this committee, so alive to the importance of the economic question, how this co-operative combination of conspiracies are, in effect, proof against the attacks of attorneys general and district attorneys, not one per cent. of trust crimes being discoverable, nor one per cent. of that one per cent. being reachable by the courts, even under the most favorable conditions. Nor do I need to explain how wages, salaries and the rewards of professional men and of the hard-working owners