

The Striking Efficacy Of Third Parties

WE sometimes hear men say: "We do not believe in third parties." Some Single Taxers have been heard to say this. If by this is to be understood the powerlessness of third parties to force the issues they stand for on other parties, then to doubt their efficacy is to misread much of American political history. For third parties, or side parties, as they are sometimes called, have been tremendously effective instruments for the organization of public thought in the accomplishment of many important reforms.

The latest manifestation in this direction is the work of the Prohibition Party now concluded in the complete triumph for the principle contended for. It matters not if its full fruition saw the Prohibition Party melting away, and that even before this its place was largely supplanted by the Anti-Saloon League. The Prohibition Party had done its work; that work was one of education undertaken at the polls, where only political principles are effectively expounded. Whatever our views regarding the principle of Prohibition may be, that principle has triumphed temporarily, at least—by the third party method pursued for nearly fifty years, even before the election of Neal Dow as governor of Maine. State Prohibition parties had existed for some time previous to the formation of the National Prohibition Party. It is interesting to note the figures of the several elections. In 1872 its first presidential candidate received 5,068 votes; in 1876, 9,759; in 1880, 11,460; in 1884, 151,070, and in 1888, 244,034. To the vote in 1884 is attributed the defeat of the Republican Party, the bulk of the vote being drawn from that party.

The vote thus growing made more and more Prohibitionists of individual voters (from conscientious motives) and of politicians (from motives of self-preservation) until the principle finally triumphed in the nation.

The history of the Populist Party is instructive for those who "do not believe in third parties," as powerful aids in making political questions political issues. Many of these despised issues were adopted by the two old parties, and, its work accomplished, the Populist Party abdicated.

The history of the Socialist Party is also instructive. Its victories have been notable—both the two old parties, while affecting to despise socialism, have become more and more socialistic. The political power of the Socialist Party has never been greatly impressive, but its influence has been enormous. As a third party it has done an educational work which only the thoughtless will despise.

Going back a little further into history, let us take the question of chattel slavery, the question most nearly allied to our own. A party for the abolition of slavery was formed in 1840 and met in April of that year in Albany. It called itself the Liberty Party and its platform was the abolition of slavery. Its candidates received in that year 7,059 votes in the nation. In 1844 this party again nominated

candidates, James G. Birney and Thomas Morris. The reason for the nominations was Clay's "pussyfooting" attitude, as we might say today. The great question before the people was the annexation of Texas as a slave-holding territory. Polk was frankly in favor of it, and Clay was understood to be opposed. But on the very eve of the convention that highly over-rated politician had written a letter in which he said that "far from having any *personal* objection to the annexation of Texas, *I should be glad to see it*, without dishonor, without war, and with the common consent of the Union, and upon just and fair terms." This caused the Liberty Party to make its own nominations, which resulted in Clay's defeat. The total vote for Birney in the nation was only 62,263. But in New York the popular vote was: Polk, 237,588; Clay, 232,482; Birney, 15,812. Clay's long-sought ambition to attain the presidency was defeated by this vote, for the overwhelming proportion of it would have gone to Clay but for the latter's cowardly truckling to the pro-slavery movement on the question of the annexation of Texas at the last moment.

The result was not without its lesson to the politicians.* The Liberty Party was succeeded by the Free Soil Party. The platform of that party declared that "Congress had no more power to make a slave than to make a king." In 1848 this party received no electoral votes, but its popular vote was 291,342. In 1852 its nominees again received no electoral vote, but it had from fifteen to twenty representatives in Congress, among them such men as Charles Sumner and Salmon P. Chase. The Free Soil Party was finally absorbed by the Republican Party, but it had done its work in forcing the slavery question to the fore. No party could ignore the question thereafter. The Republican Party was destined to be the real Abolition Party, if not under Lincoln, then under some other wise and capable leader. But the war intervened, and the course that history would otherwise have taken must remain a question for interesting conjecture. But the abolitionists had tested the efficacy of party methods for the establishment of their principles; they had forever ended the political aspirations of one of the great popular idols of the day, and they had seen the idea of the freedom of the slave expand from the small and despised Liberty Party into the greater Free Soil Party, and finally into the Republican Party under Lincoln, whose leadership they were willing to trust, and who finally justified, in a manner that is to his and our country's everlasting glory, their faith in him.

The Single Tax Party is wholly justified. As the years go on its growth in votes will be ominously suggestive of

*History repeated itself in the last municipal election here in which the vote cast for the editor of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW as the Single Tax Party's nominee for President of the Board of Aldermen resulted in the defeat of Tammany Hall. This has not been hitherto pointed out in these pages, but it is of sufficient interest to warrant this footnote. Mr. La Guardia was elected by about 900 votes; the vote cast for the Single Tax candidate was something over three thousand. As the bulk of this vote was drawn from those who would otherwise have voted for Mr. Moran, the Tammany candidate, our nomination was the deciding factor in an election in which over a half million votes were cast.

the loss of power by the old party politicians. It will educate as no other method can, and it will supplement every form of proselyting activity that the individual may undertake. It will deter us from taking part in those political activities which are at the best but of small importance and which have in the past too greatly absorbed our activities. And it will keep the principle itself clear of other entangling alliances with movements, excellent in themselves but remote from our purpose, which have too often enlisted our short-lived enthusiasm, followed by the depression at so little accomplished. We have, we think, learned a great deal in the last few years.

The Philosophy of The Single Tax Movement

WENDELL PHILLIPS, in an address delivered before the Anti-Slavery Society in Boston, on June 27, 1853, said in opening: "Mr. Chairman, I have to present from the business committee the following resolution:

"Resolved, that the object of this society is now, as it always has been, to convince our countrymen, by arguments addressed to the hearts and consciences, that slave-holding is a heinous crime, and that the duty, safety and interest of all concerned demand its immediate overthrow, without expatriation."

These words may well hold our attention at this time. For slave-holding substitute in words of your own choosing the laws which permit the private collection of the rent of land, and let the rest stand as our declaration of policy. The man or woman who subscribes to it is a Single Taxer, and he who refuses to subscribe to it does so because he is not a Single Taxer, or because he desires to compromise the principle in the interests of something or somebody.

To the contention of the conservative Single Taxer that we should moderate our demands, we quote this from the same address:

"The cause is not ours, so that we may rightfully postpone or put in peril the victory by moderating our demands, stifling our convictions, or filing down our rebukes, to gratify any sickly taste of our own, or spare the delicate nerves of our neighbor."

To the argument that we might win the support of conservatives by our attitude, he says: "The elements which control public opinion and mould the masses are against us."

If it be urged that the appeal for the Single Tax be to the intellects rather than to the emotions and sympathies of men, Phillips furnishes the answer: "There are far more dead hearts to be quickened than confused intellects to be cleared up."

To the contention that we seek not to give offence, Phillips replies in the language of Fuller: "I should suspect the preaching had no salt in it if no galled jade did wince."

To the defence of the past political programme of Single Taxers by which they have sought to engage in political

activities as members of one or other of the old parties and and by such means induce them to take up measures "looking in our direction," Phillips gives us this noble reply:

"We do not *play* politics; anti-slavery is no half jest with us; it is a terrible earnest, with life or death, or worse than death, on the issue. It is no lawsuit, where it matters not to the good feelings of opposing counsel which way the verdict goes, and where advocates can shake hands as pleasantly as before."

To those who would condemn appeals to the principle in all its fulness and urge us not to denounce the political time-servers, the eminent but hollow idols, with heads of brass but feet of clay, Phillips says again:

"How shall we, a feeble minority, without weight or influence in the community, with no jury of millions to appeal to—denounced, villified, and contemned—how shall we make our way against the overwhelming weight of some colossal reputation, if we do not turn from the idolatrous present and appealing to the human race, say to your idols of today, Here we are defeated, but we will write our judgment with the iron spear of a century to come, and it shall never be forgotten, if we can help it, that you were false in your generation to the claims of the *landless*."

We have substituted the word *landless* for the word "slave" in Phillips' great address.

Again, and toward the close of this wonderful oration, Phillips furnishes the reply to those who think the Single Tax can be advanced by treating it timidly as a change in taxation merely:

"Caution is not always good in a cause such as ours. It is said that when Napoleon saw the day going against him he used to throw all caution to the winds, and trust himself to the hot impetuosity of his soldiers. The masses are governed more by impulse than conviction."

And again to the absurdly timid programme of some of our friends in the Single Tax movement his answer is conclusive:

"Every thoughtful and unprejudiced mind must see that such an evil (as slavery) will yield only to the most radical treatment. If you will consider the work we will have to do you will not think us needlessly aggressive, or that we dig down unnecessarily deep in building the foundations of our enterprise."

In the passages we have quoted Phillips gives us the keynote of the new movement for the Single Tax now beginning. The title of the address was "The Philosophy of the Abolition Movement." We have adapted the title along with the passages, so pertinent they seem.

A FUND has been started to place the REVIEW in every Y. M. C. A. Reading Room in the country. How much will you contribute to this object?

THIS great country, which we are pleased to call ours, belongs, by legal title, to a few landlords whose number and proportion to the whole people are annually growing less.

—JAMES G. MAGUIRE.