

and legislation appropriate thereto has been enacted. No other course will be tolerated. The mob awaits. Bear with me and you shall enjoy peace and freedom once again, or else . . . the mobs are waiting inside and outside this public institution."

For seven days and seven nights did this nondescript, sallow, timid soul—this Unknown Speaker—carry on his nonchalant readings betimes; resting only when necessary to snatch a morcel of food or to sleep for forty winks, at which times unknown assistants who unobtrusively had slipped up behind him carried on his work and ready to awaken him if the parliament grew unruly. For seven days and seven nights the mob intermittently surged in and out the State House, counseling among themselves as to the promise which beckoned to them from the pages of "Progress and Poverty" through the raucous tones of the several loud-speakers. For seven days and seven nights the mob heard the brief and intermittent examinations conducted by the Unknown Speaker and his assistants. For seven days and seven nights the mob heard the patient reminders, from the Unknown Speaker to the parliament, that the mob awaited all recalcitrant members of the convention.

And on the seventh day the mob heard legislation enacted forever removing taxes from industry—forever taxing into the public treasury the site-values of land—forever abolishing involuntary idleness and economic slavery—forever abolishing the vices, crimes, nearly all disease, all alms of future programmes, all "work projects," all spectres of poverty in old age in every home, and all other contingent adverse conditions which arise from a devastating tax system.

Thirty days had scarce elapsed—industry was in full swing—labor was in great demand—capital freely was circulating—and the depression had become history. A Senator crossing the Park saw the Unknown Speaker approaching.

"Say!" called the Senator, "just who are you and how did you come to lead that mob into the State House?"

"I didn't lead the mob. They rushed me into the Senate chamber in their mad desire to reach your vanished Governor. I merely seized the opportunity to say a few words on Single Tax when I was interrupted on my way to circulate a few pamphlets in the suburbs. As to my identity, I am merely another Single Taxer."

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

Panicky apprehension at times has seized readers and listeners as they pondered the unequivocal statement of Henry George to the effect that rent taken in taxation for public purposes "virtually abolishes private ownership in land."

Without further understanding of the condition, George's words sound like the dawn of violent chaos and perpetual anarchy.

As a matter of fact there never has existed, in community life, an *unconditional* right, title or interest in land for exclusive ownership. No such right, or "private ownership in land," today exists to the benefit of the occupant thereof as against the authority of the State. Therefore, the taking of rent in taxation cannot abolish an "ownership" which never has existed.

The much vaunted "fee simple" is not a total, absolute, invulnerable title. All ownerships of land have been, in the past and are today, conditioned upon the payment of taxes or services levied by the sovereign power. Fail to pay your taxes and you lose your land; the State will sell it to liquidate your debt. As long as you pay your tax bills you may remain in possession with as much "ownership" as anyone ever can attain under any form of community jurisdiction.

There would be no change, in rights of exclusive possession or in the right to transfer title, under Single Tax. The State does not care who owns the land as long as the taxes due from the site are paid—neither under Single Tax.

"Private ownership," under either the feudal or modern form of government, is a relative designation. It offers nothing more than exclusive possession, and right to transfer title, until the sovereign authority decides otherwise.

Under Single Tax there can be no virtual abolition of private ownership in land to any greater degree, or in any effect, than has always been within the right of the community to exercise.

Under Single Tax there *can* be an actual abolition of the private appropriation of publicly-created site-values.

Ancient Authority

AFTER thoroughly tracing the title to a piece of Louisiana property his client desired to buy, a lawyer was told by the client that the search had not gone back far enough. The lawyer sent the following letter in reply:

"Dear Sir: There are no records available which concern the title to the above land any farther back than the United States Government.

"However, from a historical standpoint, I can enlighten you as to the title so that the objections you have raised will be waived.

"The land was acquired by the United States Government in 1803 by purchase from France under what we now refer to as the Louisiana purchase.

"France acquired possession of the land by conquest as the result of a successful war with Spain.

"Spain acquired possession of the land by virtue of the fact that a young man in her service by the name of Columbus, on the 12th day of October, 1492, discovered it and claimed it for Spain.

Ferdinand and Isabella, the King and Queen of Spain, got their authority for sponsoring the voyage from the Pope of Rome.

"The Pope of Rome got his authority by virtue of the fact that he said he was the vicar of Christ on earth.

"Christ got his authority by the fact that he was the son of God and God created the earth."

MELVIN M. BELL in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.