

## Causerie

BY THOMAS N. ASHTON  
TUT TUT, MY CHILD

THIS "land of the free and home of the brave" is in sore straits. Our metropolitan press of the east, of the west, of the north and of the south, is concerned—gravely concerned—over the futures of our school children.

Grade schools are crowded. High schools are swamped. Teachers' colleges are loaded with girls "that can never hope to get on a city or town payroll." These children—all these youths—annually add their quota to the standing army of idle men and women which so patiently waits and watches our educational, industrial, political and professional leaders for signs of a new freedom from the pall of idleness.

Educated labor has come to be a drug on the market—cheap as free air at a gas station, as we find that our sons and daughters cannot even give their services, *without wages*, in return for an opportunity to obtain experience in the white-collar jobs for which they have been educated. Though "learners" are exempt from the Wages and Hours Act, industrialists and professionalists fear to allow our children to serve an apprenticeship lest labor unions' power be invoked against such employers who take children off the street for a period of practical training.

We have reached the day, in the long march of civilization, when employers find themselves surrounded by hordes of not-to-be-hired young men and young women who gladly would take up the old-time method of apprenticeship in white-collar jobs—apprenticeship without wages. Time was when employers greeted with satisfaction and choosey picking the mob of job applicants at factory gates. Labor unions' political power and governmental regulation at last have checkmated the old-time move of industrialists to rescue society from depressions by returning wages to old, low levels from which again to climb the hill to better times and to a return to more ground-rent profits for site-value exploiters. Employers *must* turn deaf ears to clamoring boys and girls.

This depression may be the last to be created by our naive collectors of site rents—the last plundering of capital and labor by taxes upon industry "according to ability to pay."

Whatever the future of our school children may be—whether all unemployed youths be mobilized into more and more CCC camps or into many more National Youth Administration units—it is obvious that they are being taught everything except how to be self-sustaining in a nation which has land and natural resources enough to support ten times our present population.

Though labor unions and governments steadfastly refuse to permit employers to offer lower wages, yet our national government exercises the same means in paying

some two millions of CCC workers \$30 per month, "and keep," for planting a billion and a half trees, for fighting fires in forest lands, for building three thousand watch-towers, for building a hundred thousand miles of trails and roads, for re-vegetating a quarter-million acres of grazing lands, for building forty thousand bridges, five thousand dams, four and a half million levees, seventy thousand miles of telephone lines, etc., etc., etc., all done under the plausible plea of character-building.

This same work, done by adults at adult wages, would have been a financial impossibility under other circumstances. The benefits, to the nation, are undeniable. Fortunately, for the taxpayers who have furnished the money for the CCC, these benefits are in such form and location that it will be well-nigh impossible for land speculators to capitalize these improvements except it be in dribbles at some far future time. Unfortunately, for the same taxpayers, the investment in CCC activities is one which ill can be afforded by the real taxpayers of this nation—taxpayers in such financial straits that naught but a quick return upon every day of labor and upon every dollar of capital can keep their figurative chins above the financial tide of taxes.

With all its virtues, what has the CCC and the nation to offer CCC graduates when they reach the day of commencement? Of what avail is it to prepare children for an opportunity which does not exist?

No doubt numberless employers would be delighted to hire workers upon the same basis as that of CCC labor, at one dollar per day plus keep. But this method is denied to them by labor unions and by our paternalistic government, notwithstanding which, even if it were permitted, it would not solve the unemployment problem. In consequence, a return of the old order of "prosperity" is delayed—a new dispensation spelling a new harvest of ground-rents, for site-value exploiters, followed by a new depression.

Thus we find that the "vicious circle" in economics has been broken—checkmated by labor unionism and by governmental regulation—in consequence of which our children today are denied the opportunity to underbid their elders for lower rates of pay; they are denied the chance to oust their oldsters and to enter into an economic slavery wherefrom to produce a new prosperity for title holders to the unearned increment.

As pawns in the political economy of perplexed (?) politicians, a very small part of our school children are the regimented recipients of a compassionate CCC administration. What shall become of the remainer of our rising generation is a question evoking nothing more than a shrug of the shoulders of our ostensibly most learned educators, industrialists and professionalists who, having reached the end of their wisdom and knowledge in economics, know nothing more and are found to know not enough to understand the simple, sound and sufficient

message carried in the pages of "Progress and Poverty." These are the nation's leaders to whom the world now looks for the salvation of democracy. These are the keepers of the keys to the futures of our school children. These are our sentinels of civilization who, being determined to save our boys and girls from economic slavery, successfully have broken the "vicious circle" into which private appropriators of public site-values thus far have put labor, capital and taxation in an unending cycle of pursuit between spasmodic prosperity and depression.

These are our luminaries who have been tut-tutting Single Tax for forty years.

#### de QUINCEY SPEAKS

What horse-power has your force of mind? What is your I. Q. as a genius?

The nature of your answers to these two questions may determine your success as an exponent of Single Tax among your fellowmen. If you have a 90-horse-power mind, and are a 120-proof genius, do not flatter yourself as being "tops" in the pedagogic peddling of the one-tax-upon-site-values idea. On the other hand, if you have a one-cycle, one-cylinder power plant under your hat, and if your I.Q. is almost beyond even remote control at the right of the decimal point, take heart—have courage—carry on—because you maybe the anxiously awaited Moses destined to lead your nation out of the morass of ability-to-pay-taxes into the peaceful, prosperous vale of site-value-taxation.

Mebbe you—whoever you are—wherever you are—hold the salvation of society in the palm of your hand.

We hope that our message—which we are delivering for M. de Quincey—reaches you before you dejectedly abandon Single Tax propaganda and turn to playing beano. Until de Quincey set us aright we, too, were scanning the horizon for a high-powered miracle-mind, one with a batting average high above the highest record ever attained in either the National or American Leagues and, consequently, much higher than the achievement-record of a Rockefeller, a Ford, an Einstein, an Edison or any other lesser light.

de Quincey's dictum is, at once, the highest tribute to past and present Single Taxers' genius and force of mind—an explanation of their indifferent success in making the world safe for Capital and Labor—and a discouragement to the hope that present Single Taxers gloriously will succor the slaves of ground-rent exploiters and dramatically forestall all mortgage-foreclosures in this Land of Triple-Taxed Liberty.

"Men of extraordinary genius and force of mind," sez de Quincey, "are far better as objects for distant admiration than as daily companions."

There you are! A maximis ad minima.

This leaves present-day Single Taxers out on a limb insofar as being successful disciples among their daily

companions on WPA projects. It explains why Single Taxers have been unable, since bestirring themselves in 1880, to write Single Tax onto the statute books of these forty-eight states during half a century. When we have been prone to criticize the comprehensive capabilities of our daily companions we should have been comprehending that Single Taxers are men and women of extraordinary genius and force of mind. We should have betaken ourselves to Pike's Peak and a secluded sanctum, thereupon establishing a high-priced admission (plus state and federal taxes) for all and sundry of the hoi polloi who never fail to desire that which they cannot afford.

If we had heeded de Quincey's dictum—if we had held ourselves aloof—if we had insisted upon being "distant objects of admiration," objects of awe and reverence and honorary degrees—if we had demanded high fees for expert advice upon freeing industry from its tax-torture—we would have had no difficulty in selling tons of volumes of "Progress and Poverty" to readers who now pay \$2.50 to devour "My Ten Years in a Quandary."

Alas! We have been too naive—too detached from our alter egos—too concerned in pondering the cool, uncalculating, incomprehension of our victims—too intimate with the man in the sewer trench. We haven't known our own horse-power—our own force of mind—our geniusness in comprehending truth in its utter simplicity. The more intense our force of mind—the more miraculous our genius—the less has been our effectiveness in mixing with, and molding the minds of, the groaning, grunting, grumbling taxpayers who cling to the ability-to-pay notion when they have no ability to pay for public service which some other fellow capitalizes and pockets the profits thereof.

de Quincey has spoken.

Step out of the line, Mr. Single Taxer, and take a look at yourself. Make way for a mediocre mind to enter the mansions of our muddled statesmen.

#### LABOR LAUGHS LOUD

Unionism is in high glee. It claims victory for the national Wage-Hour Act, as approved by the American Federation of Labor with crossed fingers. This law extends "the frontiers of social progress" in the opinion of President Roosevelt. Thanks to the Herculean efforts of Congresswoman Mary Norton and Senator Elbert Thomas, a terrific "blow at sweatshops" has been struck in that this law now requires that all employers in the same industry shall pay the same minimum wages and maintain maximum hours. In other words, geographical differentials are taboo—which means that in the sweatshops of Alaska the Esquimaux who sell ice right from the North Pole Quarry must pay as many jelly-beans per Esquimau man-hour, for hacking hunks of ice off'n icebergs, as equals an equivalent jelly-bean purchasing