

## Causerie

By THOMAS N. ASHTON

### REAL THINKERS

DAY in, day out, we read eulogies of the law profession, by lawyers, for lawyers. The columns of the metropolitan presses and modern magazines continually remind us of the prominent roles played by the members of the legal profession. Very recently a news item advised us that a judge who was addressing Yale graduates informed them that lawyers are the "real thinkers" in national life, but we could not learn as to what the lawyers were thinking.

Another source informs us that lawyers play the dominant role in civic affairs but, again, this source (as well as the lawyers themselves) is silent as to the responsibility for industrial chaos which can arise, and *has* arisen, only because of the acts of the nation's dominant force. To use a Choctaw expression, civilization is in "a heluva mess," and it is high time that we discovered the dominating force which has pushed willing workers into idleness—has turned fertile fields into idle acres—has chased mountains of capital into hiding—and has multiplied taxes until industry gasps for breath.

It is a matter of record that lawyers do dominate the legislative branches of government. It is in these departments that all laws, for better or for worse, are enacted, and under which the social order goes forward or backward in consequence of the results flowing therefrom and regardless of the theory under which the statutes are enacted. The national Congress is composed of about 60 per cent lawyers as against 40 per cent for all other trades and professions.

Domination of national life and thought, by any one profession, is not *per se* a disadvantageous situation. The results obtained thereunder are all that matter. If this nation had grown and flourished, from its inception until today, free from the pall of depressions, free from idle men and women all too willing to work, free from devastating taxation upon thrift, energy, and ingenuity, and free from monopolization of natural resources which for three hundred years have been the natural right and the natural property of all the people as a partnership, free from vice, crime and disease which have flowed from enforced idleness, from taxation upon honest industry, and from the private plundering of the aforesaid public, natural rights; if these results had flowed from the legal profession's dominance of civilization then the lawyers would be entirely entitled to compliment each other upon being the "real thinkers" of humanity.

The record and the results present an exactly contrary condition possibly stemming from the unquestioned dominance of law-trained minds. In viewing the obvious and calamitous conditions which today face civilization,

we do not include the daily news items pertaining to specific cases of lawyer and judge dishonesty which chronically pass in review as we read the morning and evening papers. We are concerned with methods, not with men. History is replete with cycles of misery and suffering brought about by the sincere and honest "opinions" resulting from judicial determinations affecting the very fundamentals of our social order. Erroneous, judicial "wisdom" has caused far more widespread suffering, over great periods of time, than has the individual cases of lawyer and judge rascality. The effects of dishonest deeds do not linger long, and affect very few, after the evil-doer dies, but that which passes as truth emanating from so-called "wisdom" long remains to work insidious consequences after the honest enunciator passes from this earth revered and forever respected.

It is the very respect and unquestioned dominance, enjoyed and wielded by the legal profession, which long has diverted from the members thereof all suspicion as to their competency to play the dominating role in civic affairs. It would be a simple matter, as to presenting evidence—although an arduous task to compile, to go to the textbooks upon the various subjects of law—and to the statute books which are the fruits of lawyer-domination in legislatures—to offer conclusive data covering erroneous "wisdom" which has brought distress, suffering, vice, crime and disease upon civilization.

There is no need to prove obvious results. Conditions speak for themselves. Whatever profession really dominates our social order, the existing methods of disruptive taxation—the existing widespread unemployment—the fear of "capital" to engage in honest industry—and the widespread monopolies of natural resources which sorely are needed by those who gladly would create their own jobs in preference to governmental made-work, all these truly measure the competency of our dominating faction.

The legal profession proudly proclaims its civic domination and lays claim to furnishing the "real thinkers" of civilization. In claiming the glory, these "real thinkers" must accept the responsibility flowing from the dominance.

National conditions speak for themselves, ye members of the Bar. How do you *now* plead?

We suggest that you read Henry George's book "Progress and Poverty" before you again compliment each other on being the "real thinkers" of this human race. We suggest that you compare George's findings with your textbooks upon "real property." We suggest that you compare your much-vaunted theory of "ability-to-pay-taxes" with George's method for paying the costs of civil government.

We suggest less self-approbation among you, and more study and more real thinking about using only public-partnership assets for public expense, and more real thinking about collecting site-value rentals rather than to permit such common wealth to flow into private pockets.

When this has been done you may, indeed, become some of the "real thinkers" of humanity

### THE FORGOTTEN PHILOSOPHER

In the opinion of Albert Jay Nock, Henry George today is "preeminently the Forgotten Man of Anglo-American civilization." If this be true it is a severe indictment of Anglo-American cultural veneer and its superficial sciences and of the mental shallowness of our intelligentsia, except, of course, where the forgetting of Henry George has been done with malice aforethought.

Personally, we cannot believe that Henry George has been forgotten in a natural manner. We do believe that the vast majority of Anglo-Americans have not, as yet, ever heard of Henry George, but the fact is of little import because the majority does not lead—it follows.

If it is true that George "was one of the greatest of philosophers, and the spontaneous concurring voice of all his contemporaries acclaimed him as one of the best of men," we are not persuaded that this acclaim came from naught but empty heads speaking as poll-parrots. If we are wrong in that the Anglo-Americans *are* a civilization of parrots and stooges, why is it that they have failed or forgotten to apply their powers of observation and deduction to other phases of social activities in addition to that of taxation?

When "Progress and Poverty" continues to be "even after sixty years, the most successful book on economics ever published," the forgetting of its author certainly has not been a natural consequence.

There is but one unavoidable inference to be drawn concerning the "eclipse" of Henry George, and this inference reflects most shamefully upon the cultured, artistic, scientific intelligentsia of these United States, in that the author met with clearer understanding and acquired more influence in England and in Ireland than he did in his native land. If, in forgetting Henry George, England and Ireland may be classified as moronic peoples, what are we? If British brains are so much jelly—if Irish hearts are so many pounds of pulp—what are ours?

Mr. Nock knows of no precedent for forgetting Henry George. We know of many precedents, after sitting in the legislative branch of government. Which of Henry George's predecessors equalled his accomplishment? Not one. He has no predecessors. Is the fiddler the predecessor of the violinist? The virtuoso is an artist for art's sake; the fiddler plays for a price in any alley which yields the most pennies; where is the parallel?

When our disillusionment had been made complete, in legislative halls, we had come to know many fiddlers from all walks of life—from universities, from colleges, from commerce and industry, from bench and bar and pulpit. All these fiddlers, when confronted with the

plain, simple and sufficient truths penned by Henry George, were skilled in producing precedents for avoiding the paths of right thought, right procedure and right results.

This world's records are filled with precedents—all legally established by our political leaders and their predecessors—for continuing the exploitation of the people.

The newspapers which made widespread comment upon the advent of Henry George's book, in 1880, have not forgotten him, but they have, perforce, drawn the curtain of silence. Our professional economists, who have read "Progress and Poverty," have not forgotten its author; but discretion weighs with them more than valor. A wage-paying job in hand is worth more than two soap-box platforms in the public park, and these job-holders know equally well how to apply the rules for reading and writing and arithmetic to taxation as they do to all other subjects within the ken of man. In the matter of failing to collect site-rents they appear to be parrots and stooges; in realities they are not.

However inferentially low Mr. Nock's essay has placed Anglo-American intelligence we are not persuaded that this amply demonstrated attribute, in the fields of industry and art and science, leaves suddenly bereft, when Single Tax thoughts are in order, those who formulate our laws and their enforcements. There is too much evidence, to the contrary, "behind the scenes" in civic leadership. Did King John sign the Magna Charta before he was compelled? Do parasites voluntarily cease their insect activities? Are not "wars and rumors of wars" age-old subterfuges for diverting mediocre mankind from its economic miseries?

There are plenty of precedents, among those who place power above truth, for burying Henry George in the pit of silence.

However, we offer no disparagement to insects. We make no analogy between insects and civic leaders. We simply aim to illustrate the point, by extreme example, that parasitism in man or insect exists in a degree depending upon individual conscience in choosing between the exercise of power and the furtherance of truth.

The insect steadily pursues his vocation. The civic leader is anxious and willing and ready to prove, by fiddling, that actual experience in expediencies, superficialities, froth and fizzle, lead nowhere but to miserable awakenings. By indirection and negation they will prove to each generation that nothing but truth permanently can succeed, just as the insect indirectly proves that sanitation and eternal vigilance are the price of good health and freedom.

Henry George no longer will be forgotten when the King Johns are certain that it is high time to sign the new Magna Charta and to lift the curtain of silence.

### PILGRIMS' PROGRESS

What manner of men were our first immigrants—our