

by the present owners, why should they cease to thrive, merely because the Government occupies the position which the land owners now hold. The cases are rare in this part of the country where the actual users of the land are permitted to appropriate *any* of the annual land value.

Not that Mr. Codman, if I understand him correctly, advocates government ownership of the land. The landlord, when kept in his place, can perform a useful service for the community, by acting as a tax-gatherer, even as the bee-keeper renders service in gathering honey from the bees.

The trouble with our present system is that the land owner as owner is allowed to appropriate too large a percentage of what he gathers, and hence, people are obliged to surrender their private property in the form of other taxes to make up for what he is permitted to keep. Like everyone else he is entitled to the value of services rendered, but not more. That he is deserving of a return for merely owning the land is not obvious, but he *is* entitled to the value of his improvements, if any, and to a commission on his collections. Such a system would convert him from a parasite into an asset, and would be much wholesomer for him, because he would have to indulge in more involuntary exercise.

There are other points in E. W. M.'s critique, which might be traversed. Until he learns the fundamental fact that the confiscation (dreadful word) of annual ground rent or land value does not diminish, but rather enhances, the returns to capital invested in utilizing the land, there is no use in discussing the subtler aspects of the matter."

Why Britain Wanes

RAYMOND TURNER whose work entitled "Ireland and England" contributed, at least to the extent of its circulation, to the misunderstanding of the Anglo-Irish problem during the war, is author of an article in the *Yale Review* on "The Future of Britain." It is gloomy reading to those who regard the downfall of the British Empire as a matter of regret. His forebodings justify the belief that the ultimate defenders of stern and unbending Toryism will be found in the American Universities. He shudders at the prospect that "Labor", which he seems to regard as synonymous with Sovietism, will exercise a powerful influence on the future of Great Britain. No comment is made on the justice of his political views, but his economic shortsightedness is deplorable. He points out that Britain has increased its population to such a degree as to be incapable of self-support by British produce, but he does not emphasize the important fact that this condition of affairs was brought about under the rule of the classes whose downfall he deplures.

England imports 80% of her food supplies and produces 20%. These figures might be reversed if her antiquated and outworn land system had not depopulated her rural

regions and driven her peasantry into mill towns to be turned into raw material for manufactures. Her upper classes pursued this policy with open eyes, because a factory hand could be made a more prolific producer of wealth than a peasant could. Dividends won in the fight with rents, and large areas of the rural sections of England today are as bare of population as some of the parts of Canada to which the population is emigrating. The blight of the landlord is over it all, and if the day should come which Professor Turner predicts when England shall be as "Niniveh and Tyre" it will be due to bloated aristocracy, which wallowing in the wealth of an exploited world, raised no hand to save its own race from extinction on its native soil.

The Single Tax and Nothing But the Single Tax

ARE Single Taxers, Single Taxers? Or are they sectarians holding a complex set of beliefs, all related in a way to each other, in which the Single Tax finds some place in the setting? These are questions not of minor, but of serious importance, as they serve to indicate the central problems of our propaganda work.

Let us define. There are two meanings to the word "Single Taxer." One refers to the man as an individual in which case the thesis of this article does not apply. As an individual a Single Taxer may hold one hundred beliefs as to the relation of the Single Tax to other situations, and as to the "philosophy" upon which it is based. Again the thesis of this article does not relate to the truth or falsity of the beliefs in question. All such discussion is, per se, irrelevant. It maintains that the Single Taxers *acting as such in groups* have but one minimum belief, and only one, viz: the Single Tax. This at once sweeps away all sectarianism as it allows the utmost liberty of personal belief consistent with adherence to the minimal dogma. It is true that the color of a movement is not derived from its minimal belief, but instead from the hundreds of accruals, which make up one's mental picture of a Single Taxer. But this color is interesting only from a literary viewpoint and not from an engineering viewpoint. We are social engineers, who have to do a certain job. Once we recognize this we will be more hospitable to heresy within the ranks. And the more heretics a movement has, the better. Human diversity being infinite, no one can hope to convert the mass of men to a set of one hundred propositions. But they can be converted to one proposition, with liberty to be what they will in aught else.

What is the minimal belief? It is this. The rent of land should belong to the people, because by this means a great improvement will take place in the condition of the overwhelming majority of mankind.

In other words if anyone believes that the consequences of enacting the Single Tax will be desirable consequences, then he is a Single Taxer, no matter how he arrives at this belief, nor whatever his cognate beliefs, nor whatever be his definition of the notion of a desirable consequence. He may be a wages fund believer, a Malthusian, a Communist, a Monarchist, an enemy of "natural rights," a worshiper of the economists, etc., but as long as he holds the Single Tax to be desirable, he is of our camp and welcome.

It would be thought to be a simple proposition to have Single Taxers insist only upon a man being a Single Taxer, and not also an individualist, a libertarian and what not; but no, this has been the one thing they have not done. The reason therefore (or rather reasons) are very complex and rooted deep in the nature of man. Perhaps it is the passion for like-mindedness which is the foundation psychologically for all group action; perhaps it is the feeling of superiority engendered by having learnt the one group of beliefs that differentiates one from the common run, but whatever the motives they have not been related to the primary question of getting the rent of land for the people. Hence it comes about that our movement has been rich in pussyfooters and political compromisers, but poor in men of liberal mind. We have compromised where we ought never to have compromised, that is in politics and propaganda, and failed to compromise on what we should have compromised on, viz., on all beliefs not strictly that of the Single Tax. *Hence our historic futility, which is undeniable.* We have reduced our numbers from a great historic movement into the four walls of a sect, and we have frittered away those sectarian energies in irrelevant political and propaganda channels. In the only critical sense of the term we have proved ourselves unfit to govern. With the advent of the Commonwealth Land Party, we have remedied one half of our troubles. Let us now develop plastic brains, and, recognizing our exact engineering position, decline to require any belief of any one, other than the Single Tax. And this means more than the matter of formal adhesion. The Single Tax clubroom should be a business office with only one subject for discussion, that is, how to achieve business success. In other words there is only one legitimate subject of discussion among Single Taxers, as grouped, and that is the discussion of ways and means. All theoretical discussions are academic and are matters of private amusement.

Once we adopt this attitude we will resemble a sound business institution which by appraising critically its possibilities, and working towards its goal within these appraised possibilities, is not likely to have a bankrupt's fate. It will then be possible for men who are not of our sect, but of our belief, to come to our meetings without feeling that they are in for a seance of pitting their wits against the embattled horde of superior and overweening dialecticians, that have hitherto been the "glory" (sic)

of our movement. A small group like our own will always have its surplus of superior persons, since it will always consist of those who have done a thinking job not done by the mass of men. Since it is inevitable that we will have always in superabundance this negative factor, let us not make it too easy for them to flourish. Let us concentrate on our job.

There are two objections to the foregoing treatment. One is, granted that the consequences of enacting the Single Tax are desirable, how does one arrive at the analysis which leads to the formulation of a principle having so desirable a set of consequences? And the second objection would be how do you differentiate your own therapeutics from that of contending social physicians, such as the Socialists. Surely not by virtue of the minimal principle, for that is already a conclusion? Then it must be by the use of principles "outside" of the conclusion, but needful for the validity of the conclusion.

To the first the answer is that the improvement we contemplate is that of the economic condition of mankind, and that the moiety of earnings, whether direct or disguised, are wages. The principle that the wages of labor depend on the margin of free land, is indispensable. We do not mean this in a crude statistical sense, but in this sense, that if the margin is raised, the average wage of labor is raised therewith. Then, if the margin is abolished, it follows that a great strengthening is given to the bargaining power of labor, such that no wage short of its specific contribution to value, can be given to it. This is the minimal reasoning to establish the principle that we would benefit mankind.

The second objection is met by pointing out that the Single Tax is not a competitor. If, however, our conclusion is correct, then it follows that our principle must be included in the other frameworks of society, else they will fail to "make good." Individualism has not achieved its aim in our time, because it has not had the Single Tax. Socialism likewise will not attain its aim without the Single Tax. A real analysis of the administrative weaknesses of the Soviet State, might show that their inability to equalize the rent situation by means of the Single Tax has nullified their socializing efforts. At any rate, we compete with nobody, but any possible social order must use our conclusions, if it is to be successful.

This does not mean to say that other aspects of the Single Tax have not great theoretical beauty, and that there are not hundreds of aspects, both in general and in fiscal economics of the Single Tax, which are not as yet cleared up and worthy of great study. It does mean that acting as a group, we have not this job, but one job only and that is THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE.

WM. J. BLECH.

THE law which determines what rent can be got by the owner is styled the law of rent.—HENRY GEORGE.