

Is a Single Tax Newspaper Worth While?

WITH a talent for discovering the mote in its neighbor's eye, while unable to perceive the beam in its own, the *Public* of June 22 makes the discontinuance of the *Ground Hog*, of Cleveland, a Single Tax paper, the occasion for a depressing discourse upon the futility of a press devoted specifically to furthering the realization of the Single Tax idea. The argument is, briefly, that the more generalized an idea becomes, the less need there is, and the less support will be given, for a press devoted solely to its propagation.

The *Public*, curiously enough, overlooks the fact that, upon such a theory, its own publication should have ceased long ago. It will surely admit that a "Journal of Democracy," as it styles itself, is committed to the divulgence of an idea already much more diffused and generally accepted than is the conception of the Single Tax. With our nation in arms to save Democracy from the last murderous assault of Autocracy; with every newspaper in the land, every pulpit, every instrument of publicity, from the popular movie to the supreme head of the Republic in his inspired messages, proclaiming to our people the meaning and mission of Democracy, it must seem a logical deduction from the *Public's* own premise, that the *Public* is preaching Democracy to democrats and, therefore, performing no necessary, useful or even entertaining function. To repeat the words it quotes against the utility of preaching the Single Tax, but applying them to its own case: "Believe in Democracy? Of course I believe in it. But I do not want to bother with a paper that tells me every week that it is true."

But the whole premise of the *Public* is the reverse of true.

In the first place an idea is popular in literature or journalism in proportion to its agreement with general opinion. People applaud and greedily read that with which they are in accord. Humanity thinks gregariously. Surely this is obvious to even the most careless observer. It is the departures from type that in journalism find it difficult to prosper.

In the next place, a knowledge of the Single Tax doctrine is by no means generally diffused. Very few of our 48 States even recognize the distinction between improved and unimproved values—a distinction long ago made in every province of the Argentine, not to speak of Australia; and yet that distinction is the very foundation of the practical application of this great reform. The meagre initiatives mentioned by the *Public* in support of its contention are its own refutation and conclusive evidence of the scanty knowledge of, or belief in, Single Tax principles in this country.

The difficulties of the Single Tax press arise, indeed, not from the wide diffusion of Single Tax principles, but from the restricted acquaintance with, or knowledge of them by the general public. The Single Tax press is preaching in a veritable desert, and its lack of wide circulation and prosperity is a natural consequence of that fact, omitting, of course, such cases where mismanagement is of itself sufficient explanation.

Is it not just possible that the *Public* has failed to understand one of the special functions of a Single Tax press under present conditions? Is that function merely to propagate the Single Tax doctrine among the uninformed masses? Is it not also to act as an instrument of unity and a source of inspiration and information for militant Single Taxers?

The task of educating a population of over one hundred millions, by means of an independent Single Tax press, is too gigantic a proposal to deserve a moment's serious consideration. The diminutive, though earnest efforts in that direction, beginning with Henry George's *Standard*, and ending with the *Ground Hog*, are simply demonstrations of misdirected zeal and a measure of the financial incapacity of Single Taxers for such a vast undertaking. It is trying to measure a transcontinental railroad with a yard stick.

The chief function of a Single Tax organ is, surely, the more modest, practical one above mentioned, of serving Single Taxers directly in their individual or organized propaganda activities. If each Single Tax society or Single Tax party group has its monthly bulletin for its members, very good. It promotes union, stimulates emulation, supplies practical suggestions for action, serves as a kind of nerve ganglion for keeping the local movement alive. Better still, however, if the bulletin takes the shape of a national organ, like the SINGLE TAX REVIEW, through which a wider outlook over the national movement is possible and intelligent contact maintained with Single Tax progress throughout the world.

Today, more than ever, is such a national organ essential to the success of the movement. It provides the very material, for instance, which, properly utilized, would interest the business community, to whom, according to Mr. Gibson in his post mortem in the *Ground Hog*, will devolve the task of forcing the Single Tax as an issue upon our various public authorities. What better material, for instance, for business men and public authorities to study and meditate upon, than the account of local progress in Single Tax in New South Wales, presented by Mr. Huie in the May-June number of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW? Any Single Tax association or Single Tax party group wishing to bring to their local authorities and business community the realization of the Single Tax as a practical working proposition, could do few things more effective to that end than to distribute Mr. Huie's article generously in their neighborhood.

The article by Premier Hughes of Australia on the purpose and results of the Australian Federal Land Tax ought to have gone to every senator and congressman at Washington. Scarcely a more timely contribution to the discussion of our next national budget could be found than the account of Australia's Federal Land Tax initiative.

The important documents and data published from time to time in the REVIEW regarding progress of Single Tax ideas and actual Single Tax legislation measures in South America are cheering news to our workers everywhere and, if widely known, must aid powerfully all Single Tax efforts.

in this country. We are all allies in this reform. A success in one country is a victory for all.

So essential is a national organ for cohesion and co-operation, that the different organizations scattered over the country might well, in the interest of the cause, give their active aid: (1) by contributing to the REVIEW freely the news of their own work and of important incidents affecting the local tax situation, and, (2) by assisting the management of the REVIEW to extend its circulation among men of education and of action whose interest in economic or social reform may have been roused by the activities of the local society or otherwise. The debate on taxes and new economic adjustments is nation-wide today. Even a lively antagonist of the Single Tax reform, who may have proved impervious to the academic arguments presented by our orators or literature, might easily change his opinion and become a co-worker in view of the practical evidence of Single Tax advance in legislation, with which the REVIEW abounds.

In a word, the REVIEW can be made a most effective instrument of propaganda, and should be extensively used as such. It is the best existing means for giving unity, weight and additional impulse to our movement. All this is self-evident. The question is, have we the statesmanship or intelligent leadership in our movement to recognize the real need of such an organ in the new time that is now calling imperatively for new methods and wider and more emphatic insistence upon the ethical as well as the fiscal necessity of the readjustment of our whole economic and social world by means of the Single Tax?

As a sort of postscript I feel I must now approach a somewhat delicate question. Both the *Public* and the SINGLE TAX REVIEW have their sustention funds—that is to say, neither publication is enabled to maintain itself by its subscription list alone, and the returns from advertising are in both instances negligible. Now the number of readers of the *Public* is much larger than the number of REVIEW readers, but to obtain a reader for the *Public* costs a great deal more than to obtain a reader for the REVIEW. Indeed it costs much more to obtain a reader for even a single copy of the *Public* than for a single copy of the REVIEW, comparing the cost of one publication with another, or comparing the sustention fund of one publication with that of the other.

The REVIEW has been among those who have claimed for the *Public* a useful character in its own field. We do not need to argue this question, therefore. But the REVIEW, or a Single Tax organ of the same character that shall fill better the office the REVIEW is trying to fill, is one of our main necessities, and it is the duty of Single Taxers to give it their fullest support.

FRANK CHODOROV.

MUCH important and interesting matter is left out of this number owing to pressure upon our columns. Events are succeeding one another so rapidly these days that it is difficult even to keep up with the onward march. These are days of a great awakening. Only a few Single Taxers are asleep.

Report of James F. Morton, Jr.'s Lecture Work

THE past season opened inauspiciously with the collapse of the organization of the New York State Single Tax League, for which I had been acting as field secretary and lecturer. It was considered advisable, however, by some of the friends of the cause that my work be continued; and the generosity of a few individuals made this possible. A portion of the expense was also borne by the Farmers' National Single Tax League, which has commissioned me as its field secretary for New York State. With the breakdown of the machinery available in the preceding seasons for circularizing organizations and otherwise co-operating in securing engagements, and with the necessary handicaps imposed by war conditions, the work has been carried on throughout the year under many disadvantages. The unprecedentedly bitter winter, with the failure of the coal supply and partial breakdown for a time of normal transportation conditions, played an important part in hindering engagements and caused the cancellation of engagements already made, as well as in a marked lessening of the usual attendance.

In spite of the above handicaps, there were many reasons for encouragement. The farmers in particular are receiving the message with avidity hitherto unknown; and support is coming to light in quarters where unqualified opposition was formerly the rule. In all, I delivered 68 lectures, with an aggregate attendance of 2075. These were given in 54 different cities and towns, and were distributed as follows: Granges, 37; college classes, 7; churches and church clubs, 7; business organizations, 4; other clubs, 3; forums, 2; parlor groups, 2; miscellaneous, 6.

The places in which lectures were given were as follows: Millerton, Myers Corners, Hyde Park, New Hamburg, Mt. Vernon, Warwick, Troy, Schenectady, Clarksville, Greenfield Centre, Corinth, Saratoga Springs, Coxsackie, Schuylerville, Quaker Springs, Washingtonville, Middletown, Harrison, Hudson, New Lebanon, Riverhead, Clinton, Little Falls, Canastota, Rome, North Manlius, Syracuse, Cicero, Plainville, North Colesville, Deposit, Binghamton, Findley Lake, Jamestown, Ashville, Cottage, Ellery, Forestville, Sinclairville, Cassadaga, Pendleton, Brockton, Wales, Lockport, West Shelby, Buffalo, Barre Centre, West Henrietta, Mumford, Lowville, Talcottville, Plessis, Belfort.

The work of the coming season will begin early in September, under the auspices of the Eastern Single Tax Lecture Bureau, with headquarters at 120 Broadway. Plans have been completed for increasing its efficiency by the co-operation which was not possible under the conditions of the past season.

Features of the season outside of New York were a lecture to an excellent audience in Washington, and a debate before the University Extension Society of Philadelphia with Professor Jacob Hollander, of Johns Hopkins University.

JAMES F. MORTON, JR.