

subtracts that amount from the wages that must otherwise be paid.

If men were once more free to work, the labors of the charitable societies could be concentrated on the widows, the orphans, and the helpless, and the job could be done thoroughly and handsomely. They are now engaged in filling a bottomless pit.

Why have all the efforts of government and of philanthropists failed to bring prosperity?

Because they are engaged in an undertaking which is physically impossible. Public prosperity and private control of land are a contradiction in terms. Nothing can ever make men prosperous while their earnings may be taken in advance and without limit for a permit to work.

Is there any mystery connected with depression?

Yes. The mystery of why fifteen million men who are barred from work are out of work; and the mystery of why workers who must bid against these fifteen million unemployed find their wages low; and the mystery of why the American people have not recognized the vicious land system as the inevitable cause of the depression.

Would it be a serious matter to abolish the private control of land?

Yes; but it will be a more serious matter to continue unemployment and poverty and depression until the end of the world. And communism is rather a serious matter.

Reformers, Respectability and Officitis

MOSES did not choose to be respectable. Had he done so, the greatest reform movement in history would never have happened. He might have advocated some ameliorating measures for Jewish slaves, such as shorter hours, or better housing conditions, or maybe even a minimum wage. In advocating such things he could have maintained a comfortable place among the ruling group, of which he was a member, he would not have violently offended the Pharaohs, and thus would have retained his personal comfort and importance. Perhaps he might have made the condition of his co-religionists somewhat less repulsive. But they would still be slaves. Their degraded position would in time have weakened their resistance to the idolatry of the Egyptian religion. Indeed, during the Exodus it was the degenerating influence of their past environment that caused him so much concern, and it was only because of his genius as a leader and moulder of opinion that he was able to overcome this influence. Several generations of slavery produce a people that is akin to a domesticated animal—entirely subservient to a master. Realizing the growing decadence of his people

Moses did not propose any change that would ease their thralldom; he chose the difficult course of revolt, with a consequent loss of respectability.

Respectability in a reformer consists in attempting to slightly alter the condition of the people without depriving the predatory group of their vested interests. Their slaves were the vested interests of the Egyptian landlords. The latter might have tolerated some humane suggestion for easing the condition of their slaves, provided the institution of slavery were not abolished. In our time, we find the House of Representatives advocating old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, community chests, collective bargaining—"social improvements" of one kind or another that do not in the slightest affect their vested interests and monopoly privileges. Such political reformers as Roosevelt and Tugwell and Ickes et al are quite within the sphere of respectability in advocating these innocuous measures. They do not risk their social or political prestige by advocating the application of a salve to the sore-covered hide of the slave, provided they do not threaten the institution. Social ostracism is visited only on those who attempt real reforms—that is, reforms that aim to deprive the privileged class of their privileges. Moses was determined to free the Jews, and therefore he lost caste with the Pharaohs. The Roosevelts of our day have no intention of breaking with our Pharaohs; they are respectable.

Jesus was not crucified because of his ethical teachings. His martyrdom (unless we accept the theory of vicarious atonement) was the direct result of his attack on the vested interests of the Jewish priests. Had he let them continue their money-changing in the temple unmolested, he might have continued without interference the performance of miracles and the teachings of the "other cheek" philosophy. But Jesus realized that the spiritual degradation of the Jews, and the consequent loss of their political independence, was the direct result of their poverty, and that this was caused by the selfishness of their rulers. A true reformer does not deal with effects; he seeks to eradicate causes. In doing so, if he is really a great man, he is influenced neither by the interests he attacks nor the consequences upon himself. Jesus' unrespectability cost him his life. He did not lay the blame for the priests' wrong-doing upon a "system;" he did not condone their greed on the ground that the laws of the land permitted it. He did not try to change the laws. He accused the priests of personal guilt. Sin is always personal; there is no institutional sin. If the law permits me to deprive other people of their property, that fact does not exonerate me from the crime of robbery. Society simply is too stupid to recognize the crime and to visit punishment upon me. The great reformer aims to show society that my acts are in fact criminal; having done so, restrictive and retributive regulations follow. Jesus' attacks upon the priests

was personal. He was unrespectable, and therefore effective.

The great reformers of all times were those who attacked personally the beneficiaries of an iniquity. When a reform movement ceases to attack, when it seeks to make changes surreptitiously so as not to shock sensibilities, when it attempts to provide soft couches for those it aims to knock down, when it tries to coddle harlots into virtuous living, when it woos the interests it aims to destroy and accepts their bribes, then that reform is doomed. The success of the socialist movement—a success that must be measured by the general acceptance of its impossible philosophy, even by those who cling to the hope that by some magic of words Marxism and individual freedom can be reconciled—is due to the fact that it has never ceased to attack the predatory interests. In the sense that it will rectify social and economic maladjustment socialism can never succeed. It is a false philosophy. But in spite of the falseness of their philosophy, socialists have been eminently successful in having it tried, even in our country where the traditions of individualism were thought to be of the people. Why? Because socialists never were respectable. They always attacked, viciously, relentlessly, even fanatically.

The failure of the Henry George movement—a failure that is attested not only by the paucity of the number of its adherents, but more because every political measure that is advanced throughout the world aims to entrench the system of private land ownership, showing that Henry George's teachings are of no influence whatsoever—the failure of this movement to gain headway is due solely to its proneness for respectability. We cannot escape this conclusion, unless we accept the position that the philosophy itself is lacking in truth, a position which even the opponents of the Single Tax do not altogether take. The very nicety of Henry George's logic has been the means taken by those who professed to believe it—if the movement has had leaders, who were they?—to soften its attack on the privilege it aims to destroy.

Henry George himself was a courageous reformer. His proposal is a deadly attack on the most vicious and most powerful vested interest the world has ever known—the private ownership of the earth. Never did he soften this attack, never did he fail to point out that those who own the land own those who live on it. He compared land owners to slave owners. He accused land speculators of causing hard times. The polish of his phrases and the perfection of his logic only accentuated the viciousness of his attack. In the presentation of his revolutionary idea, either in printed word or on the platform, he did not compromise, nor did he hold any hope for those whose privilege he aimed to destroy, or suggest any method for easing their pain. He was

unscrupulously attacked by the land owners, he was even jailed. He was not respectable.

But George was greater as a reformer than as a leader. He seemed to have lacked political vision. His understanding of human frailties, it is now evident, was as deficient as his grasp of economic truths was great. For, when he deliberately led his followers into the Democratic Party (that was, and is, as much a bulwark of privilege as is the Republican Party) because Cleveland said something about reducing tariffs, he injected into the Single Tax movement a poison that for fifty years has sapped its energy and reduced it to its present state of innocuous desuetude. That poison is *Officitis*—that which there is no seductive siren, whiskey nor narcotic more weakening to the moral fibre of a reformer.

Every great writer, who is at all prolific, has produced something which is mediocre. But George did more than that in one chapter of one of his great books. He laid the ground work for the very disintegration of the movement in the chapter entitled "Practical Politics" in "Protection or Free Trade." The illogic of that chapter would induce one to believe it an interpolation were not the style truly Georgean. His argument throughout the book is that international free trade can have no beneficial bearing on economic or social conditions unless we have free trade among individuals, and he points out that free trade England did not remove poverty there because of this inadequacy. And then, in this chapter, he argues that Single Taxers should join the Democratic Party (which, he must have known, was financed by the landed aristocracy) because it professed a desire to lower tariffs—"as an entering wedge." Surely some evil genius—or was it some politically minded friend?—must have directed his pen in the writing of this chapter.

The joining of forces with a political party that is supported by privilege was (unwittingly on George's part) a concession to respectability—and when a reformer makes that concession his cause is doomed. The first concession is the prelude to others, and the progressive dilution of a great truth makes it akin to a falsehood. Had George been followed by a Moses or a Jesus the evil results of his tactical error would have been averted. Unfortunately, no such dynamic personality has as yet taken up his cause. There have been a number of brilliant orators and teachers of his gospel, the most prominent and capable of whom were more influenced by the erroneous method he suggested (we know it was erroneous) than by his own honesty and singleness of purpose. Not that these men were not wholehearted in their advocacy of the Single Tax. But Henry George's first concession in principle—that is, the possible adoption of free trade as a means toward the goal of economic liberty—made possible further concessions on the part of his followers. In proposing such things as the "Single

Tax Limited," (which is Single Tax only by devious reasoning), in spending so much effort toward securing initiative and referendum laws, in devising sly measures for shifting the tax burden—"sly" because the obvious idea was to avert the accusation that such measures might tend toward the breaking up of land monopoly—these men were unconsciously influenced by George's political mistake rather than by George's uncompromising philosophy. So much so that some so-called stalwart Single Taxers—they would themselves lay claim to being so-called—have been advocates of such incongruities as income taxes and inheritance taxes, NRA and government ownership. The process of seeking respectability has become so complete as to remove all taint of being reformers.

But more vicious than the vitiating of the singleness of his proposal by this concession was his weakening of the morale of his most accomplished disciples by making politicians of them. It is an axiom that politicians prefer office to principle. A statesman (in theory at least) will go down with his policies, but a politician will abandon an entire platform if need be to retain his position. The thought that Single Taxers in office, elected on a platform that is diametrically opposed to the Single Tax, or appointed to office by those elected on such platform, might do more for the advancement of the philosophy than can the independent reformer is quite erroneous. It is, in fact, dishonest to expect them to do so. The party in power is there because it has promised the people to do certain things; to do other things, like enacting the Single Tax, which it did not promise, is to violate a sacred trust. Every member of the party, no matter how insignificant the post he holds, is in duty bound to carry out its political promises; he is a traitor to this trust who advocates anything else. Most likely every Georgist who has held office has harbored the hope that he might sometime induce his party to write the Single Tax into its platform. A sort of "boring from within" plan. This is an obvious impossibility, since both of the dominant parties in this country are controlled by privilege through the vital nerve centers of their campaign funds. Besides, it is ridiculous to expect a political party to adopt a principle for which there is no public clamor. When, therefore, the Single Taxer achieves public office and discovers that his advocacy of this fundamental reform is at variance with the policies of his party, and may militate against his continuing on the public payroll, he finds it more politic to subdue his reforming proclivities. This is not dishonesty of purpose; it is that pardonable human frailty—Officitis. The office overcomes the man. That is why the very able disciples of Henry George who followed his suggestion of joining the Cleveland Democracy accomplished nothing toward the advancement of the Single Tax, not even to the extent of increasing a knowledge of the philosophy. As office holders they became Democrats first and Single Taxers

thereafter. This is not said in a spirit of rancor or even criticism, for this metamorphosis of the reformer to respectability is, in a politician, as easy as it is inevitable. As a matter of fact the prominent Georgists who became Democratic office holders did damage to the advancement of the cause; for their silence in high places, and their circumspection in all places, caused their less fortunate and adulating co-believers to also subdue their demand for a liberated earth to the mere whisper for a shift in taxes, so that the ordinary citizen, who may have listened to these erstwhile preachers in pre-office days, ceased to take interest in this great truth now diluted. Jehovah must always be omnipotent; when his high priests explain and modify Him he is no longer Jehovah.

Time, the great healer, is gradually undoing the damage done to his cause by George's tactical error. Because of its fundamental truth and its greatness of purpose his philosophy has survived; also because throughout the years a few bold ones persisted in preaching it in all the purity of its promise. Had these few honest souls been aided by those whose Single Tax beliefs were submerged by their political affiliations—and these were, on the whole, of greater abilities—perhaps the great truth would by this time have achieved wide public acceptance. But time has removed most of those who claimed the mantle of George. The hope of the movement is in a new generation who will pursue their own methods and tactics, uninfluenced by the errors of the past. To them the disputes between the purists and the respectables will be unknown. They will get their knowledge from the inspired pages of "Progress and Poverty"—where the truth is revealed in all its purity—and not from the modifiers, whose words are even now almost forgotten. And sometime, somewhere, from among these disciples will arise a Moses who, thoroughly unrespectable and immune to the disease of Officitis, will demand in a voice loud enough to be heard complete freedom from slavery; whose genius for leadership will make possible the era of human progress promised by Henry George. And he will probably be crucified.

FRANK CHODOROV.

Land Value and Its Taxation

By HENRY L. T. TIDEMAN

THE challenge of Frank Stephens, based I presume on the basis of his enclavial experience, on the impossibility of making effective effort to take ground rent into the public treasuries, calls for an answer.

How often the question has been asked: How can you levy taxation upon land values when the Single Tax will have destroyed land values? And how often it has been answered! But, once again this question arises from, and is itself involved in a too free use of words. If anyone believes that the taxation of land values will "destroy" the selling price of land, he should take time