

Can We Promote Prosperity?

ADDRESS OF CHARLES H. CILISKE, HENRY GEORGE CONGRESS, WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 12

I THINK we are all agreed that the Single Tax will promote prosperity. What there is disagreement about is the question whether emphasizing the fact that the Single Tax will bring prosperity is the best way to increase the membership of the Henry George Clubs?

So I wish to give a brief outline of the idea back of the Henry George Prosperity Club to show its value for propaganda purposes.

New as the idea seems to be, it is still quite old. It started with me some years ago, when pondering the problem presented by the question:

"Why, in spite of our having the best proposition ever presented to a people for their consideration and approval, does our movement grow so slowly?"

And pondering, I saw what I believe to be the stumbling block to the more rapid spread of our idea among the voters, so that they could conscientiously join our movement and demand the enactment of our cardinal principle into law.

I do not mean to say that we have made no progress or no converts. We have, but nothing like what we ought to make and will have to make, if we are ever to have sufficient public sentiment behind our movement to compel the enactment of our central principle into law.

There have been wonderful books and pamphlets printed for our propaganda; and famous orators have made wonderful speeches to audiences that would be thrilled to great enthusiasm by their logic.

But so far as the masses of voters are concerned, the ratio between economic ignorance and economic wisdom is as great as ever.

The average man knows absolutely nothing of Henry George; nothing about the Single Tax; nothing about economic rent; nothing about the effect of taxes on business or labor or prosperity. Nothing so far has been written on the taxation of land values, since "Progress and Poverty" that appeals to the average man, so that it can be said that it is bringing him into the movement in greater numbers than the customary one at a time. The army with banners bringing in the elusive prisoner, "Public Sentiment" predicted for our movement fifty years ago by Henry George is still in the future.

I have often compared the present civilization to an automobile that won't run. Everything is there,—gas, water, oil, starter and generator O. K. And yet, the darn thing won't go. The owner tried to start it until his battery is almost worn out, and then he starts to crank. And he cranks and cranks and still it won't go. And out of the crowd that has gathered to watch the performance steps a man who asks the owner of the car what might be the trouble. The owner admits he doesn't know and is trying to find out. So the stranger goes to the car and

after making a few eliminative tests, he sees that the trouble is in the distributor. That is, the grounding of a little piece of wire produced a short circuit, so that the current needed could not reach the spark plugs. He adjusted that and seeing that the gears were in neutral, pressed down the starter and the motor started without further trouble.

So with Henry George when he came upon the scene. He found the world puttering with a car called Civilization, and like the mechanical car just described, the darn thing wouldn't go either. Its going was periodically interrupted by hard times, over production and business depressions; and the remedies applied were soup kitchens, free beds and charity balls.

These periods of depression would last a long time and bring idleness and misery to labor and bankruptcy to business. Being specially gifted with economic, analytical and diagnostical ability, Henry George set himself the task of discovering what the trouble was and how it might be cured. For, seeing the vice and misery and poverty and wretchedness that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and power would not let him rest.

And so he examined and analyzed and diagnosed and weighed and wrote. And his writings resulted in the production of a wonderful book. Such a book on political economy as the world never saw before or since. This book, generally speaking, divides itself into three parts: Ailment, remedy and health of civilization.

The ailment was described by the term "Progress and Poverty." The remedy was called: "Taxing Land Values Exclusively." This has since become known as the Single Tax. The cured patient was described as one who was enjoying "Permanent Prosperity" and the most splendid environment imaginable, enabling it to develop a culture of the very highest order, with justice and liberty reigning supreme.

Like every other book ever written, this book had to have a name. The choice lay between a title descriptive of either the ailment, the remedy, or the cure, health of civilization, and it fell to the lot of the ailment.—"Progress and Poverty" was chosen as a title for the book. Single Tax was adopted as a name for the remedy and the movement. The cure or health alone was left unnamed. No concrete title such as "Progress and Poverty" or "Single Tax" or "Protection" or "Free Trade," had ever been given to the economic condition that we firmly believe will obtain in civilization after the Single Tax is applied.

So about four years ago, pondering the question first propounded: "Why, in spite of our having the best proposition ever put before a people for their consideration, does our movement grow so slowly?" I came to the conclusion that we were neglecting the most important phase of our movement for propaganda purposes. The epochal point in our movement is just when the remedy is ap-

plied. After the remedy is applied will come such a time of real Prosperity as the world has never seen.

So I started to talk Permanent Prosperity. Little by little I developed the story as now told in the pamphlet of that name. I told it over and over until I got so I could hold a person's attention while I was telling it. But it was not the fact that I was holding the attention of the listener that convinced me I was on the right track. But the expression of approval I received from men who were total strangers to the Henry George philosophy. So from telling the story of Permanent Prosperity to the people I came in contact with, I started to write it. After finishing it, I polished and boiled it down to the last syllable. A few friends read it, and with their approval, it went to the printer.

After getting it from the printer, I began to sell it, not give it away. I received so many expressions of approval from men who had never read a line of Henry George that I felt sure that the time was ripe to take the next step and organize a club along the line suggested in Permanent Prosperity. This was done, and the first Henry George Prosperity Club held its first meeting with a good attendance and lots of enthusiasm among those present.

A president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer were elected. After informal discussion on local matters and the selection of a delegate, the meeting was adjourned to the call of the chair.

All this is the result of these young men reading Permanent Prosperity and hearing me explain the Henry George idea along that line.

So it seems to me that if I can accomplish this much by myself, how much more could be accomplished by our united effort? A club in every ward and a captain in every precinct.

The Henry George Prosperity Club realizes, of course, that it has nothing to crow about as yet; it may fall down absolutely flat. It knows that everything lies in the future. Mistakes may be made, as in other human institutions. These will be rectified as soon as possible. But our whole aim and object will be to get Public Sentiment behind us.

We have eighteen or twenty young men now as members in the club and more ready to join as soon as we become more thoroughly organized.

These young men have signified a willingness to put on the harness and get down to hard work.

Now wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if we were to organize a number of Henry George Prosperity Clubs in this city and start a Henry George faction and elect a dozen or two Henry George men to the City Council? Wouldn't it be just wonderful to start something like that, and wouldn't that be an answering echo to the appeal sounded by Henry George fifty years ago when he wrote: "He who will hear, to him the Clarions of the battle call, and call, and call, and call, till the heart swells that hears them. Strong soul and high endeavor, the world needs you now."

Employment and Poverty

BY GRACE ISABEL COLBRON

OWING TO MISS COLBRON'S ABSENCE THE PAPER WAS
READ AT THE HENRY GEORGE CONGRESS, SEPT. 11

THE problem of increasing unemployment, called by some reformers the "shame of our modern civilization," (and the lion in the path of the politician who would paint the blessings of this best of all worlds), is, for the moment, a matter of such pressing import that it blinds the eyes to the greater shame that lies behind it, the shame that conditions it. The willing worker who cannot find work, and, as a consequence, cannot provide the barest necessities of life for himself or his dear ones is indeed a pitiable, nay even a tragic figure in these days of high-pressure production of wealth. The vague sentiment of the many who are anxious "to do something for somebody" without knowing what, centers around this figure. As do the fears of those who see the danger his increasing numbers mean to any highly civilized community.

But what neither the soft-hearted "philanthropist," nor the opportunist politician, nor, sometimes, even the eager reformer seeking causes, see is the fact that behind this growing unemployment and attendant poverty lie generations, centuries even, of poverty attendant on *employment*, poverty that has always, as soon as any vestige of "modern civilization" came into being, been the lot of the toiler even while he toiled. This is the very heart and core of the shame of civilization; this fact that work, manual labor employed in basic production, wresting from the earth the necessities of life for mankind, forming them into shape for mankind's use, has seldom put the most willing worker out of reach of poverty—that poverty Henry George calls "the open-mouthed relentless hell yawning beneath civilized society."

The shame of our modern civilization is that work, i. e. the basic toil of production, is in very fact synonymous with poverty. Even in these days of Ford cars for the Masses and apparent high wages, the hurried reporter frequently uses the phrase "a poorly dressed man, evidently a working-man." And the "poor but honest working girl in her simple print gown," is still a stock figure of melodrama *because* so perfectly comprehensible to any audience. The gown is silk now, but cheap silk that does not last,—And the change of material is but one opportunity the more for the sob-sister paragraphist or the film scenarist to awaken sympathy with the "pathetic luxuries of the poor."

The danger of passing industrial crises that mean unemployment to many is a very real danger because the great mass of toilers, manual or white-collar class, have never been able to set aside enough money to tide them over such times of depression. The poverty attendant on unemployment, the under-consumption that causes stoppage of the wheels of industry, conditioning more un-