

Land and Freedom 1920

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FAIRHOPE, the Single Tax colony on the shores of Mobile Bay, celebrated its 26th anniversary On Jan. 1st of this year by a dinner at which a large number of colonists and visitors sat down. R. F. Powell, of Fairhope, expounded the Single Tax and E. B. Gaston reviewed the history of this most interesting colony experiment. E. Yancey Cohen, Treasurer of the National Single Tax Party, made an interesting address.

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Address of E. Yancey Cohen At Fairhope

(Following is the address of E. Yancey Cohen, National Treasurer of the Single Tax Party, at the Anniversary Dinner of the founding of Fairhope, the Single Tax colony near Mobile, Ala. Mr. Cohen is a veteran Single Taxer known wherever the cause is known. He was a frequent contributor to Henry George's Standard.]

MR. COHEN in acknowledging the chairman's complimentary words remarked that he had rather expected to be presented as a more or less objectionable character, inasmuch as he appears as Treasurer of the Single Tax Party -and treasurers are proverbially objectionable; while as for being a member of the Single Tax Party that alone, in the eyes of some Single Taxers, was a very objectionable, almost criminal stigma.

But in spite of these handicaps he was glad to feel that in Fairhope at least he and his family were receiving a friendly reception, which was grateful indeed and heartily appreciated and reciprocated. In speaking of the Single Tax Party he was reminded of the famous description of the newly awakened Third Estate in France given by the Abbe Sieyes at the beginning of the French Revolution. Paraphrasing these words one might ask concerning the Single Tax Party: "What was the Single Tax Party? Nothing. What is the Single Tax Party? Something. What does the Single Tax Party wish to become? Everything.

And first, why was the Single Tax Party nothing? Truly a strange admission to make, after thirty-five years of Single Tax agitation. But it must be remembered, said the speaker, that although the Single Tax movement started as a political movement, with the New York labor unions united in the endeavor to elect Henry George mayor of that great city and with the demand for the Single Tax on land values the first and

only plank in the United Labor Party's platform, yet by a strange perversity in human nature, an unheard of lack of tenacity in keeping to the main point and feebleness in the difficult art of political organization, this movement which for a season or two attracted almost world-wide attention and struck terror into the hearts of the privileged classes, began almost immediately to disintegrate. Its leaders were not politicians. In vain did a minority element headed by Father McGlynn point out the necessity of building up an organization by gradual accretions of members and hard, hard work. Father McGlynn's ideas were side-tracked and Single Taxers rushed headlong into the Cleveland campaign for tariff reform; enthusiastically maintaining that this was a step in the right direction." And for thirty years they have been "kidding themselves" with the belief that the Democratic party is the party for them. What a delusion! They achieved no power within the Democratic party and they lost all semblance of an organized Single Tax minority. Tammany Hall was an organization without principle, while the Single Tax was a principle without organization. In vain did the Single Taxers maneuver for the election of Single Taxers to office within the Democratic party. In vain, because when elected even though the Single Tax office-holder filled his position with the greatest intelligence and zeal for the public service he yet was invariably met with a solid refusal on the part of the Democratic party to listen to his Single-Tax proposals. His bills were invariably pigeon-holed in committee; or if, as in the case of the Johnson-Maguire bill, a vote was reached, a half dozen votes was the number cast in a House of over four hundred. The reason was clear. The Democratic party's platform contained no mandate for the Single Tax and the members of the party were in no way bound to vote for it. So it was an instance of love's labor lost.

Now such being the case, after a generation of such disappointments, some of our more militant and dissatisfied Single Taxers began to cast about for a way to revive the moribund movement. And their choice fell upon the original idea of an organized political party movement. A bunch of obscure persons in Pennsylvania set the ball rolling. A local party was organized in Philadelphia. New York was the next adherent to the new thought. Then New Jersey followed, organized by counties. Meanwhile the inspiring influence of Luke North had begun to rouse Single Taxers generally from the lethargy into which they had fallen, following the diminishing activities of the Fels Fund. Why not at least take advantage of favorable election laws, wherever found and seize upon the free advertising offered by the State's Board of Electors? The circulation of millions of ballots, sample and official, the natural cooperation of the press in presenting the political news of the day, these and the publicity afforded by candidates' speeches and many other ingenious methods of propaganda were opportunities too good to be missed. And so the Single Tax Party was born, and in

1920 it held in Chicago its first national convention and in the late election it appeared on the ballot in eleven states. At least, according to the Abbe Sicysese, the Single Tax Party is proving to be something.

But by the same token it aims to be "everything." Why this supererogation? Because a life-time of study in the science of political economy has convinced Single Taxers that they have a remedy and a way out from the distressing results of fatuous ignorance on the part of millions of their fellow men. They have a means of putting an end to the cataclysm which privilege has at length brought upon mankind, and of bringing order out of chaos. The tragedy of the Single Tax movement lies in the fact that at this time of world crisis its lack of strength is so palpable. Where is the voice of Henry George? Why is it not resounding now like the horn that rang through Roncesvalles? The reason lies with Single Taxers themselves. They appear to be individuals first, last and all the time. They refuse to combine, refuse to cooperate. The discipline of a political party will teach them to cooperate and will prove to them the virtues of organization. This is perhaps the chief present merit of the Single Tax Party. Let us take a leaf from the book of the socialists and communists. Even as they call to the workingmen of the world to unite, let us cry, "Single Taxers of the World, unite."

In New York City a meeting was held in Keen's Chop House, 36th street, on Saturday, May 28, at which some forty five persons sat down to dinner. Joseph Dana Miller acted as toastmaster, and among the speakers were J. R. Hermann, Mrs. Roswell Skeel, Jr., Robert C. Macauley, William J. Wallace, E. Yancey Cohen, George Lloyd and others.