

seemed mightier than the city, for one day many of its citizens came with him and measured my banks and the height of the dam. I believed that my destiny was to be fulfilled, but they went away with the same expression that I had noted on the faces of the others. I did not know what work they planned for me to do, but when I saw a great engine pumping the foul water from a muddy creek to the inhabitants of the city, I knew that a new slavery had come. Everywhere men had sold their inheritance for a mess of pottage, and must now beg for the right to live, and be scourged to their tasks by the whips of hunger and cold in the hands of their taskmasters.

N. O. VYNE,  
Emporia, Kans.

### HOW I BECAME A SINGLE TAXER.

(For the Review.)

I often look back with interest on the extraordinary change that has come over my manner of looking on questions economic, social and religious. Brought up as I was to regard with profound reverence the extortions of the squire of the parish as the sacred "rights" of property, trained as I was in the schools to regard the present system of government and our present status of civilization as well nigh the acme of perfection, it required no small amount of study and thought to lead me to do as Saint Paul did, to abandon these "childish" things and to grow into a comprehension and acceptance of better and truer ideals.

After fifteen years spent in the teaching profession, including a year at the Teachers' Normal School and four years at college, I entered the employment of a financial institution. The business was principally the lending of money and taking mortgages in security. This led me to a study of economics. The text books on the mechanism of exchange, on banking and currency, gave me an introduction to the marvels of the mechanism of human society, a mechanism whose wonderful adjustments and relationships are as beautiful as anything in the whole of the adjustments of this physical universe.

At one time I was preparing an address for the teachers of this city on the subject, "The Education of the Citizen." Of course I was searching out such books and magazines as would afford me any assistance. In a copy of the Popular Science Monthly I found an article by a California writer named Henry George. The reading of this affected me profoundly. The dignity and refinement of the style, the masterly grasp of the subject, the logical sequence of the paragraphs, all impressed me in such a way as to make me anxious to read anything that this Henry George might write. Thus was I prepared to read Progress and Pov-

erty as soon as it appeared. It may be of interest to state that the first copy of that work which I had the opportunity to see, was loaned me by a gentleman who afterwards became one of our largest land speculators, while I developed into an ardent Single Taxer.

Some time after this I was requested to give an address on the subject of Economics to the Chautauqua Circle in the Metropolitan Church of this city. In the preparation of this address I met with an unexpected difficulty. Without any questioning I had adopted the definition of wealth given by most of the writers on this subject, namely: wealth consists of those things which possess exchange value. Thus wealth and value were often treated as identical, increasing and diminishing concurrently. But the moment I commenced to analyze exchange value I found myself for the time being non-plussed. With part of the definition there was no difficulty, but with the other part there was apparently a flat contradiction. Exchange value must have at least two conditions, utility and limitation. Bread has utility and at the same time it is limited in quantity, so that labor must be expended to keep up the supply, therefore, it forms part of what we call wealth. From the moment that the farmer begins to stir up the soil till the loaf is turned out of the oven, each step of the process is an addition to the utility and, therefore, an increase in wealth. All that was clear enough. Here we had three things concurrent, increase in utility, addition to the stock of food and increase in value. But this was giving heed only to one condition of exchange value, namely, the utility. As there are two conditions, we may increase the value by commencing with any one condition and then adding the other. In the case of the bread we had commenced with the limitation and had added the utility. Suppose now we commence with the utility and then increase the limitation. Air possesses utility. We cannot add thereto; but we may imagine that the limitation increases till we have to employ labor to supply the deficiency. At first there was no value, for a sufficiency could be obtained simply by opening the mouth and breathing. But into a diving bell it must be pumped, and now it has a value, and as the bell goes deeper and requires more pumping so the value advances.

Is this increase of value an increase of wealth? Not by any means, just the contrary. As food becomes more valuable during a siege with the increased scarcity, this increase of value, instead of indicating greater wealth, is the sign of greater poverty.

In the first case when labor added utility, the increased value indicated greater wealth. In the other case when the value increased because of greater scarcity, the increased

value was the indication of greater poverty.

Here were two things utterly different, of which I had found scarcely so much as a hint in the various works on Economics which I had read.

How was I to teach that value was the distinguishing characteristic of wealth when I found that in some cases value was just as truly the sign of greater poverty.

When the early settlers found an abundance of fuel at their doors, they were wealthy in that commodity. But with the clearing of the forest and the enormous increase in population, the supply of fuel relatively diminished, so that the value advanced. No one would dare to call that advance indication of an increase in wealth. The same is true of the value of the land. The enormous value to which it reaches in the large cities is the indication of its scarcity and consequently of poverty in land. That is the one thing which society must economize more and more.

Was not the proof here overwhelming that instead of value being homogenous, as had been taught by the text books, it was of two distinct kinds, the increase of the one value being concurrent with an increase in wealth, and the increase of the other being concurrent with an increase of poverty.

To work out along this line of enquiry became at once a most interesting and important study. It did not take long to see that between the value of a house and the value of the land on which the house stood, there is a polar difference. The house is the product of individual enterprise, we know the name of every worker thereon and the time occupied, but who can specify the man who produced the value of the land in the center of London or New York? When a man makes a garment he can say I produced so much of the value; but when the crowd comes and increases the value of the land, then we must say "We produced that value." Therefore, it follows by inexorable logical sequence that the man who makes a garment may say: I produced this, therefore it is mine; but of the land value he must say: We caused this value, therefore it is ours.

As the one value indicated an increase in wealth, we might call it a "plus" value, while the other, indicating a diminution of wealth, must then be called a "minus" value. Consequently, in the assessment of any city, when the value of the buildings is added to the value of the land, is not that just as absurd as to add together plus six and minus six and say the result is plus twelve. Is it not scientifically as outrageous as to confound assets and liabilities or debits and credits.

Then again, it did not take long to see the extraordinary difference between the duration of a labor produced value and the duration of the value of a town lot. The house has its maximum value when it is new. From that time the value begins to decline

till at last it passes away to dust and ashes. But the value of the lot keeps increasing and increasing year after year and age after age. A few years ago one of our prominent divines, editor of a paper, defied us to show that there was any difference between the value of the land and any other value. I called his attention to the enormous growth of the value of the land of New York since the time of Peter Stuyvesant, the old Dutch Governor, then I asked the reverend gentleman what he would pay for the old boots of that long-deceased governor. In a conversation with one of the best known writers of this continent, the gentleman asked me if I proposed to take for the public use all unearned increment, the unearned increment of wheat as well as that of land. "All the wheat in the world at the present time," I replied, "will be consumed before a couple of years expire; but the value of the site of the City of London has grown since the time Julius Cæsar landed on that island." The value of labor products is marked with transition and death, while the value of the land abides practically for ever. The value of the building is a declining one proceeding by a diminishing progression to the vanishing point, while the value of a town lot is an advancing one growing and growing with every accretion to the population.

But there is also another remarkable difference between these two values. In my youth I have seen men make nails by hand. It is probable that a blacksmith could not make them faster than one per minute. A few weeks ago I watched a machine make nails at the rate of four hundred per minute. It is quite safe to say that the cost of converting the rod or the wire into nails has been reduced one hundred fold. In the use of photography, the introduction of the steam press, the locomotive and the steamship, humanity has increased its productive power a thousand fold. Wherever for the power of the hand we can substitute some mechanism, there the improvement will be made.

But this can be accomplished only in the case of labor products. By no possible device can we reduce the price in town sites. So long as New York is the best place on this continent to conduct business, so long will the value of the land in that center stand at the highest figure.

From the initial difference which I had observed between the two values, thus I traced a series of other differences. All these differences were so great, that what we would assert positively of the one value, we had to assert negatively of the other value. The one value indicates an increase in utility, the other does not. The one value is the product of individual energy, the other is not. The one value is concurrent with an increase in wealth, the other is not. The one value is transient, declining from its maximum point till it finally disappears, while the other value does not

thus pass away, but continues to increase for all time as population grows; the one value is capable of diminution by inventions, while no possible invention has ever reduced the other.

But the climax to all this investigation was clear and overwhelming when I saw the relationships that must result in society in dealing with these values. We have allowed individuals to appropriate as their private property the value which the community causes to the land. Consequently one portion of society has grown to immense fortune simply by placing industry under a greater and greater tribute. The two extremes of society have grown further and further apart and the gulf is continually widening. Let this continue and the result on society must be disastrous. But on the other hand, when two men produce utilities and then exchange their products, there are all the indications of equity and beneficence. It is to the existence of this exchange of product for product that all the blessings of civilization are due. Let any one once get a proper apprehension of the difference of these two relationships and the question of taxation can for him have but one solution. Where should the taxes be placed? Should it be so as to harass and hinder the production or exchange of those products on which man depends for his existence and his comfort, or should they be placed so as to prevent that relationship, which begets the lord and the serf, which inevitably divides humanity into producers enriching and extortionists impoverishing?

This gave me a new vision of political economy and led me to enlist in the crusade for the emancipation of humanity.

W. A. DOUGLAS.

#### COMMUNICATIONS.

Reading, Pa.

Editor *Single Tax Review* :

My experience indicates that it would be a great benefit to the Single Tax cause if prominent Single Tax writers would more frequently present and emphasize the real conservatism of the proposed remedy in such a way as to appeal to reasonable conservatives who are now generally repelled by the air of radicalism that has naturally but unfortunately gathered around it. It is radical in the sense that it is fundamental, not superficial; but it is commonly put in the same class with Anarchism and Socialism, and is greatly discredited by the association. If its conservatism be shown by impressing its real relation to these opposite extremes of radicalism, it will more easily attract the favorable consideration of men of standing who otherwise shy at the mention of it.

W. G. STEWART.

College Hill, Ohio.

Editor *Single Tax Review* :

Many Single Taxers are in the habit of

using an expression which I think is an unfortunate kink in their terminology. It is the phrase, "Wealth produced by the community as a whole."

When used to designate the sum of individual productions it is not objectionable, but this is not the meaning which Single Taxers attach to it. "Give to the individual what he produces and to the community what it produces," is an expression frequently heard, which shows that those who use it have in mind a kind or form of wealth which is over and above and distinct from that produced by individuals.

This is unscientific and a weakness. It is inconsistent with the Single Tax premise that wealth is produced by labor; for the reason that if each individual worker is given or retains the produce of his or her labor *nothing remains*.

Looked at in this way the wealth produced by the community as a whole is seen to be a myth.

What Single Taxers propose is that the community take economic rent, but there is no need to pretend that individuals will not be called on to part with a portion of the wealth produced by their labor. True, it will be that part which measures the natural advantage under which they work, but this does not change the facts, and for the good of the cause I think the use of the aforesaid expression should be discontinued.

JAMES BANN.

Los Angeles, Cal.

Editor *Single Tax Review* :

As to the proposed Single Tax Conference at Fairhope, Ala., next February, I am inclined to regard it favorably. It would be impossible for many Single Taxers of California to attend it. But that is no reason why hundreds of others, who live nearer Fairhope than we do, should not be there, and get up a rousing revival that would echo around the world.

RALPH HOYT.

Toronto, Canada.

Editor *Single Tax Review* :

Fairhope is so far from Canada that I fear we could not send a special representative. Mrs. Graham intends taking up her permanent residence in the Single Tax Mecca shortly and Mr. Robert Tyson talks of paying a visit to Cuba. There is a possibility that both could be present at the proposed gathering. Railway fares are so high and Single Taxers are so busy that it would be well to know that a sufficient number could attend before declaring the gathering a general conference.

A. W. ROEBUCK.

Mt. Pleasant, Tenn.

Editor *Single Tax Review* :

Regarding a Single Tax conference, while a better attended and more widely repre-