

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SINGLE TAX.

By J. Farrell.

No. 1. — About Current Politics.

A few days ago a correspondent, "H. M.," writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, expressed wonder that the single tax party could work hand in hand with the revenue tariff free traders. He quoted some words used by the Hon. J. H. Carruthers to the effect that the man "who thinks by introducing any policy whatever he is going to bring about the millennium, and have no more poverty and no more pauperism, is a mad dreamer, and the best place for him is a lunatic asylum." Such a man, "H. M." very truly says, is Henry George, and such men are all those who endorse his doctrines. They do emphatically believe that poverty is an anomalous condition, made possible at the present time by anomalous laws, and one which with the reform of these laws will entirely disappear from the world. The extracts from George's works quoted by "H. M." truly and fairly represent the views of those who understand and accept his teachings. They *do* think that "we might all have leisure, comfort and abundance, not only of the necessaries, but even of what are now esteemed the elegancies and luxuries of life." They *do* believe "that we might all have enough wealth to satisfy reasonable desires; that we might all have so much of the material things we now struggle for that no one would want to rob or swindle his neighbor; that no one would worry all day or lie awake at night fearing that he might be brought to poverty; or thinking how he might acquire wealth." They agree with the author of "Protection or Free Trade," as against Mr. Carruthers, that "free trade is a movement which has for its aim and end nothing less than the abolition of poverty and the vice and crime and degradation that flow from it." This being so, "H. M." thinks that it is inconsistent in Mr. Carruthers and those who think with him to accept assistance from the single tax party, and foolish on the part of the latter to render it, and asks that an explanation be given.

The reply of Mr. W. R. Johnson in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* is solid upon the ground which it covers. The single tax party are fighting for free trade, not for free traders, so-called. They are not identified with any man or party and are quite untroubled by dogmatic and injurious prediction, no matter from what quarter it emanates. They know perfectly well that practical statesmanship, clinging to place and power and only proceeding by cautious stages to just such legislation as public opinion makes imperative, regards their reform as a thing that may possibly have to be seriously taken in hand some day and dealt with, but for the present can be shelved, albeit with marks of strong approval. The French cynic who crystallized practical statesmanship into this pearl of advice — "If you are asked to do what is very difficult, say 'it is done.' If you are asked to do what you know to be impossible say 'it shall be done tomorrow'" — was more than French. He was universal. And he who said that practical politics proceed along the line of least resistance enunciated another cosmopolitan truth. The practical politician cannot, however, be held blameable for that. He is part of a system which has grown up; it is the best we have, and he can but administer it as well as the contending elements around him will permit. Legislation walks in fetters of party intrigue and evasion, and compromise and surrender, as the career of any statesman from Sir Robert Peel to Mr. Dibbs shows. Little by little, making headway slowly against the opposition of ignorance and interest, reforms have been consummated. The theorist

explores new fields of thought and charts the way in which long afterward the cautious feet of the practical politician, shoved ahead by the shoulders of the people, will pick their steps. No great reform has ever yet commended itself to that timid personage just at first. Pioneer work isn't his line, and as a general rule whatever is good enough for the public in the way of laws and conditions will do for him. In its larger aspect, therefore as the final solution of the problem of social disturbance and the lost key to harmony among men, it is not to be expected that the single tax will enlist the sympathies of those whose province is to dispense current government. The most that can be looked for is that the advisability of a tax on land values as a means of raising municipal or national revenue may be favorably considered and legislated upon, and that the Government are prepared to do this we have reasonable assurance. The same individual who would regard the ultimate aims of the single tax party as impracticable can see at a glance the practicability of the principle they advocate when applied in certain cases, and will endeavor to secure its application.

The advocates of the single tax are prepared to abide by such a test of their principle as the deriving of municipal taxation from land values only, or such a tax as that proposed by Mr. Burns (without its unjust exemptions, however) and so strenuously opposed by the protectionists. The latter fiscal party do not seem to protest against the municipal adoption of a land value tax, but the proposal to apply it in a large way for national revenue would lessen the need for taxation through the Custom House, and they are naturally to be found arrayed against it.

The single tax party are simply the advance guard of free trade — of true free trade which has never yet existed in the world and never can exist, as I will show hereafter, until all land values are taxed away by the State for the benefit of the whole people. Revenue tariffism, as Mr. Johnson says, is as false as protective tariffism, but it is only upheld because those who favor it see no other feasible way of getting necessary revenue. They aim at interfering with the operations of industry and trade in the smallest degree possible. As a very able writer puts the case in a recent leading article in the *New York Standard* "To promote the shifting of taxation, if we intend to be more than dreamers of dreams, we must co-operate with men who go our way, no matter how short the distance they go. . . . Concentration of taxation on real estate is a proposition in our direction, and whoever favors it is our ally. In brief, any proposal to reduce or abolish taxes on industry; national or local, no matter how unimportant in itself, is in our direction; and when any considerable number or influential body of people advocate it, not only are they our allies in theory, but we owe it to the cause we would promote to add our strength to theirs. This is not a new policy. It is the policy of 'Progress and Poverty.' "\* There is no other policy open to those who hope one day to achieve the legalization of the single tax than to throw themselves heart and soul into the struggle for free trade and against the false and unjust idea of trade restriction, as they have done in the United States and here. That is the only true and logical course to take. Free traders, if they are genuine, must seek to make trade free, and if they do so there is no other possible source of revenue than land values. Protectionists, on the other hand, are desirous of undertaking State encouragement and restriction of industries through a mechanism of many taxes.

\* *The Standard*, July 27, 1889

Thus far I have written in reply to "H. M." or through him, in explanation to a large number of

the people of this colony who are evincing a profound interest in this great question — an interest which the approaching visit of Henry George will certainly increase. In a sentence, the single tax is free trade, and the advocates of it the most advanced of free traders. They recognize in the revenue tariffists the party which stands nearest to them and must draw nearer still. As for the "inconsistency" of Mr. Carruthers and others in accepting the help of "dreamers" the truth is if I may use some of the "brutal candor" which Mr. David Christie Murray is acclimatizing among us, any kind of help is very acceptable when the numbers are so close as they were at last election, and the revenue tariff party cannot afford to despise the votes of visionaries. Indeed, to do them justice, while a few of the conservative and somewhat fossilized revenue tariffists, or as Mr. Barton would phrase it, "Calico Jimmies," showed alarm at the spread of the Henry George idea, and assumed a somewhat de-deprecatory [sic] attitude the most and the best of them — at least as represented by the Free Trade and Liberal Association — showed a readiness to follow the great American free trader to the end. Long before the new body came into existence, the Freetrade Association had the courage to spread broadcast through the country copies of "Protection or Free Trade?" a book which, while exposing the fallacy of protection, embodied a scathing indictment against revenue tariffism. There has been altogether far less hostility shown to the new philosophy than might have been reasonably expected, and such hostility as has been manifested plainly arises from a misunderstanding of it. But the speeches of the delegates at the conference of the Freetrade and Liberal Association, especially many of those from the country districts, showed that keen attention had been given to the subject and a thorough knowledge of it gained. Moreover, they showed an iron determination to demand the recognition of the principle as part of the platform of free trade and an ardor in support of it which carried all before them. I saw no such ardor displayed during the whole of the Protectionist Conference, save when it was advanced that Mr. Barton was the only man who could save the country, and when Mr. Buchanan incidentally mentioned the fact that in America, under protection, they did not execute any of the prisoners of war, while in free trade England the sound of the headsman's axe rang continually through the land after a victorious battle.

That is the way of it. The fate of the single tax party here is naturally and indissolubly bound in with that of the revenue tariff party, and no expression of individual opinion is going to make any difference. The tendency of thought all the world over is in an entirely new direction. The first expression of that awakening thought was the registering of a practical majority of 100,000 votes for free trade at the last Presidential election of the United States; the second has been the magnificent reception accorded to Henry George during his recent tour through Great Britain and the adoption of his doctrine by several of the leading free trade bodies there as the complement and finality of free trade. But there are larger signs of advancement than these. The Knights of Labor, that most magnificent of labor organizations, beaten and broken at every point by triumphant monopolists, after a couple of years of industrial insurrection, has at length begun to learn the truth that a protective tariff does not protect the laborer, and to endorse the single tax, as the true way to industrial emancipation. Throughout the length and breadth of the States the principles of true free trade are being disseminated by hundreds of newspapers, single tax leagues and labor guilds, and the next election there may be awaited by the champions of freedom with complacency. The meaning of "Progress and Poverty" is becoming apparent to the world, and it is easy to conceive that, as a profound English thinker foresaw, the closing years of the nineteenth century will bring with them the most profound change the world has ever known.

In view of the coming visit of Mr. George to our shores, I propose in the papers which will follow this to set forth as briefly as possible what the teaching contained within the covers of "Progress and Poverty" really is, and why I, in common with thousands of others here, regard it as the most valuable addition that has ever been made to the literature of political economy. I will show wherein the teaching of George differs from that of Mill, Ricardo and the hitherto accepted economists, and try to make evident to all readers, in the simplest possible manner, the tremendous import of this difference. I will endeavor to show the error and wrong underlying the protective tariff idea, to explain why the revenue tariff system is so little better than in England today tens of thousands of human beings live lives of misery and brutality that make one shudder to think of, and to justify my belief that in the single tax, and in it alone, lies the perfect solution. Before entering upon this task I am tempted to quote from a speech made in New York not long ago by Mr. L. F. Post, a well-known lawyer and economic writer, touching the book itself, the writer of it, and the effect it has had upon the world. "In New York," said Mr. Post, "Mr. George observed the misery and squalor, the wretchedness, the poverty that everywhere abound here in the midst of the greatest plenty, and he says the thought would not let him rest until he should find the cause. Even then he was prepared for the work. He was not a college graduate, but he had acquired an education which many a university graduate cannot boast of, and in addition to that an education which no university gives. He had been a sailor before the mast. He had been a traveler in farthest countries. He had been a journeyman printer. He had been a magazine writer. He had been a working editor. He had been a keen observer, at all times and everywhere, of the conditions that surrounded him. He was familiar with the standard political economy. His knowledge of history gave him that second-hand experience, as it has been called, without which any man can only grope and blindly experiment. But he was not satisfied. He was about to undertake a work which he intended should be perfect in every particular so far as it lay in his power to make it. And so he made the first part of his work one of special preparation. History was re-read with this special purpose in view. Political economy was re-studied, and every proposition subjected to the most profound analysis and the keenest and closest reasoning of which he was capable. When Henry George began to write 'Progress and Poverty,' he was prepared to write it! He knew all of value that had been said or written on the subject, and if we are to judge by the replies to 'Progress and Poverty,' he knew all that can be said, and he had made himself competent to winnow the chaff from the wheat. The same conscientious labor he had devoted to preparing for the work he devoted to the work itself. Chapter after chapter — whole books — in that small volume were written over and over again. Every statement of fact was verified. Every proposition was measured and weighed and tested by all the methods known to logicians and by every expedient a cultivated mind could invent. Every sentence was scanned and scanned and scanned again. Conclusions were discussed with the learned and the unlearned, with the business man, the professional man, the man without work, the mechanic, the unskilled laborer — all with a view of preventing the escape of any objection which might be suggested by experience or skill, or ingenuity, or observation, whether from friend or foe. And so, after many months of writing and many more of hard work at special preparation, together with the preparation a lifetime, the book was finished.

"After the manuscript of 'Progress and Poverty' was finished, a small edition was published in San Francisco. Then the book went begging for a publisher in New York. The great publishing house of the Harpers rejected an opportunity to publish the greatest book of the century. A special arrangement was finally effected with the Appletons. Soon after, Kegan-Paul, the great

publishing house of London, printed it, but their edition, except a few copies, was stored in the cellar, where they expected it to remain. About that time Mr. George was in Ireland, and the British Government conspired to make 'Progress and Poverty' popular in London. They arrested its author as a suspect, and within a fortnight Kegan-Paul could not get out editions fast enough to meet the demand. I do not mean to say seriously that this little incident was the real cause of making 'Progress and Poverty' popular. It called attention to it, but the book was worth the money, and after it once got out people wanted more. Since then, in England and the United States and Canada, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of copies of the book have been sold. No one, not even the author himself, has the slightest idea of the number that have been sold. Not only has it circulated so largely among English-speaking people, but (and this is hardly, if at all, true of any other American book) it has been translated into all the principal languages — into French, into German, into Italian, into Swedish, into Dutch and into Turkish." (4)  
(4) *The Standard*, April 13, 1889.

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The Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW: 1883-1930) Mon 30 Sep 1889 Page 7

SINGLE TAXERS OR REVENUE TARIFFISTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.

Sir, — I have often wondered how the single tax party could consistently join hands with revenue-tariff free traders; and the speech of Mr. Carruthers on Wednesday has increased my surprise. Your report credits Mr. Carruthers with this statement: — "The man who thinks that by introducing any policy whatever he is going to bring about the millennium and have no more misery, no more poverty and no more pauperism is a mad dreamer, and the best place for him is a lunatic asylum."

There is ample evidence that Mr. Carruthers expressed the views of all the prominent free trade leaders in this colony on this subject, and that they as well as he acquiesce in what Mr. Henry George calls the "comfortable theory that it is in the nature of things that some should be poor and some rich." Sir Henry Parxes and Mr. M'Millan, at all events, have shown that they have the opinion so frankly expressed by Mr. Carruthers. Now I shall prove out of Mr. Henry George's own mouth that his aim is the extinction of poverty and pauperism and the complete material equalization of mankind. I purposely refrain from quoting from "Progress and Poverty," finding in Mr. George's minor works abundant evidence to prove my assertion.

In *Social Problems*," page 74, Mr. George writes: —

Did He who made this whirling planet for our sojourn lack the forethought of man? Not so. In soil and sunshine, in vegetable and animal life, in veins of minerals, and in pulsing forces which we are only beginning to use, are capabilities which we are only beginning to use, are capabilities which we cannot exhaust --- materials and powers from which human effort, guided by intelligence, may gratify every human want of every human creature. There is in nature no reason for poverty -- not even the poverty of the crippled or the decrepit.

Again, at pp. 67-8 of the same work I read: ---

I join issue with those who say that we cannot all be rich; with those who declare that in human society the poor must always exist. . . . What I mean is, that we all might have leisure, comfort and abundance, not merely of the necessaries, but even of what are not esteemed the elegancies and luxuries of life. . . . I do mean to say that we might all have enough wealth to satisfy reasonable desires; that we might all have so much of the material things we now struggle for, that no one would want to rob or swindle his neighbor; that no one need worry all day, or lie awake at nights, fearing he might be brought to poverty, or thinking how he might acquire wealth."

Then in "Protection or Free Trade," at page 334, Mr. George says  
Citizenship in a civilized community ought of itself to be an insurance against such a fate (poverty).

And at page 339 of the same work:—

He who follows the principle of free trade to its logical conclusion . . . will see in free trade not a mere fiscal reform but a movement which has for its aim and end nothing less than the abolition of poverty and the vice and crime and degradation that flow from it, &c.

I leave it to your readers to say whether these quotations (the accuracy of which can be readily tested) do not prove my contention as to the aim of the founder of the single tax party. If they do, the obvious conclusion is that Henry George is regarded by Mr. Carruthers and other free trade leaders as a "mad dreamer," who deserves to be sent to a lunatic asylum. And what is held concerning Henry George must also be held concerning those who take their political economy from him. How inconsistent, then, it is of Mr. Carruthers to accept political aid from "mad dreamers," and how stupid and foolish on their part to render it! Surely after this the single tax party ought to tell us whom they are going to follow. If they follow Mr. George they certainly cannot travel with Mr. Carruthers, for the paths lie in opposite directions. I suppose the party is within its rights in making a compact with the enemies of Henry George's principles; but then they have no right to pose as single taxers when in reality they are revenue tariff advocates. Let us have an honest explanation.— Yours, &c. H. M.

Manly, August 29.

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The Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW : 1883 - 1930) Fri 11 Oct 1889 Page 6

#### SINGLE TAX V. REVENUE TARIFF.

To the Editor of the Daily Telegraph.

Sir, — Your correspondent, "H. M." in today's issue of The Telegraph, wishes an explanation of the reason for the alliance between single taxers and revenue tariff free traders, and quotes from a speech by Mr. Carruthers to show that single taxers have little or nothing in common with the present free trade party. "H. M." is under a wrong impression in the matter; the single taxers have no intention of following the present leaders of the free trade party, their aim being to convert them from the illogical principles of revenue tariffism to those of true free trade. That they have met with a large measure of success is amply demonstrated in a variety of instances, notably by the proceedings at the recent conference, when the single taxers forced the delegates

to affirm the principle of direct taxation on land values. "H. M." may feel assured that the single taxers will not rest satisfied with a mere affirmation of the principle, but will leave no stone unturned to have it embodied in legislative enactment.