

Mr. Bliss says that this method of computing average numbers "seems to have been planned to create a fictitious increase in earnings between 1890 and 1900 similar to the fallacious increase shown, at the preceding census, between 1880 and 1890."

He further says:

To see how this works, let us suppose that some brick and tile establishment employs an average of 100 wage earners for each of six months of the year, and is idle for the remainder of the year. Following the new census method, we add together the averages obtained for each of the six months, and divide the total, which is 600, by 12. This gives us 50 as the number that would be reported at the present census as the average number, a number that is just one-half the number that would be obtained by the method of preceding censuses. The effect of reducing the number of wage earners one-half is of course to double the apparent average earnings.

Mr. Bliss shows that if the lumber and timber industry be omitted from the census of Michigan and Wisconsin there will be shown a decided decrease in wages in these states, instead of the rise that is shown by the juggled census. He thinks that wages in this country declined between five and ten per cent. from 1890 to 1900, instead of only one and one-half per cent., as indicated by the official census.

This much for Col. Wright's wage statistics. His price statistics are juggled even more deftly. Without attempting to explain the juggle in them, it is sufficient to say that some of the Republican experts in the statistical bureaus at Washington do not hesitate to say (though they do not publish these statements) that Wright's price figures are absurd, largely because they are practically not "weighted" at all. That is, because the prices of unimportant articles are given as much weight, in making averages, as are the prices of important articles. Thus, the prices of 130 unimportant articles, which show a decline, will offset the prices of 130 important articles, which show a similar advance. Mr. Wright quoted the prices of 260 articles. He balanced the price of nutmegs, which declined from 100 to 46.9, with lard, which advanced from 100 to 161.9. He put in bicarbonate of soda as of equal importance with fresh beef. The soda showed a decline of 48.3 per cent., while the beef rose 25.9 per cent. He put in two quotations of sheep, which showed a rise of only three per cent., and only one of corn, which showed a rise of 56.9 per cent. The value of corn sold is 20 or 30 times the value of sheep sold. The price of matches, which declined ten per cent., affects Mr. Wright's averages as much as does the price of coke, which rose

58 per cent. Wood screws, which show a decline of 37 per cent., affect the averages of metals and implements as much as do steel billets, which show a rise of 42 per cent. The value of steel billets consumed is 100 times that of wood screws.

Of course an ordinary statistician, with an elastic conscience and a reputation to insure the publication of his statistics, can prove anything by such methods. Yet it is on such stuff as this that Col. Wright's reputation as a statistician rests. That he still has some reputation left is due, in part, to the faithful and untiring efforts of his Republican boomers who have profited by his errors of discretion and who, everywhere and at all times, laud him and his truly wonderful work; but, more largely, to the lack of effort of the Democrats to expose and publish these errors. For instance, a long article will soon be given to the press from Washington, quoting Wright's figures and results. It will be printed in all papers, both Republican and Democratic. Criticisms, no matter how severe and well deserved, will find space only in a few scattering Democratic papers and will be unnoticed in Republican papers.

In these ways, a well disciplined Republican press makes small men great and great men small, for the time being. Future history will do much to adjust matters, but the politicians are looking for immediate results, and care little for the higher historical criticism which may follow. If their pockets are well filled with the proceeds of political graft, they are willing to take their chances with future critics.

Great is Col. Wright, professional wage raiser and price reducer and official statistical juggler of the G. O. P.!

BYRON W. HOLT.

SINGLE TAX PRINCIPLES.

The single tax controversy which Myron T. Herrick, the Republican candidate for governor of Ohio, has provoked in the present campaign in that state, revives interest in the following single tax tract, compiled several years ago from the writings of Henry George, and published under the title, "The Single Tax; What It Is, and Why We Urge It."

I shall briefly state the fundamental principles of what we, who advocate it, call the single tax.

We propose to abolish all taxes save one single tax levied on the value of land, irrespective of the value of improvements in or on it.

What we propose is not a tax on real estate, for real estate includes improvements. Nor is it a tax on land,

for we would not tax all land, but only land having a value irrespective of its improvements, and would tax that in proportion to that value.

Our plan involves the imposition of no new tax, since we already tax land values in taxing real estate. To carry it out we have only to abolish all taxes save the tax on real estate, and to abolish all that which now falls on buildings or improvements, leaving only that part of it which now falls on the value of the bare land. This we would increase so as to take as nearly as may be the whole of the economic rent, or what is sometimes styled the "unearned increment of land values."

That the value of the land alone would suffice to provide all needed public revenues, municipal, county and national, there is no doubt.

To show briefly why we urge this change, let me treat (1) of its expediency, and (2) of its justice.

I.

From the single tax we may expect these advantages:

1. It would dispense with the whole army of taxgatherers and other officials which present taxes require, and place in the treasury a much larger proportion of what is taken from the people, while, by making government simpler and cheaper, it would tend to make it purer. It would get rid of taxes which necessarily promote fraud, perjury, bribery and corruption, which lead men into temptation, and which tax what the nation can least afford to spare—honesty and conscience. Since land lies out of doors and cannot be removed, and its value is the most readily ascertained of all values, the tax to which we would resort can be collected with the minimum of cost and the least strain on public morals.

2. It would enormously increase the production of wealth—

A. By the removal of the burdens that now weigh upon industry and thrift. If we tax houses, there will be fewer and poorer houses; if we tax machinery, there will be less machinery; if we tax trade, there will be less trade; if we tax capital there will be less capital; if we tax savings, there will be less savings. All the taxes, therefore, that we would abolish are taxes that repress industry and lessen wealth. But if we tax land values, there will be no less land.

B. On the contrary, the taxation of land values has the effect of making land more easily available by industry, since it makes it more difficult for owners of valuable land, which they themselves do not care to use, to hold it

idle for a larger future price. While the abolition of taxes on labor and the products of labor would free the active element of production, the taking of land values in taxation would free the passive element by destroying speculative land values, and preventing the holding out of use of land needed for use. If anyone will but look around to-day and see the unused or but half used land, the idle labor, the unemployed or poorly employed capital, he will get some idea of how enormous would be the production of wealth were all the forces of production free to engage.

C. The taxation of the processes and products of labor on the one hand, and the insufficient taxation of land values on the other, produces an unjust distribution of wealth, which is building up in the hands of a few, fortunes more monstrous than the world has ever before seen, while the masses of our people are steadily becoming poorer. These taxes necessarily fall on the poor man more heavily than on the rich; by increasing prices they necessitate larger capital in all businesses, and consequently give an advantage to large capitals; and they give, and in some cases are designed to give, special advantages and monopolies to combinations and trusts. On the other hand, the insufficient taxation of land values enables men to make large fortunes by land speculation and the increase in ground values—fortunes which do not represent any addition by them to the general wealth of the community, but merely the appropriation by some of what the labor of others creates.

This unjust distribution of wealth develops, on the one hand, a class idle and wasteful because they are too rich, and on the other hand a class idle and wasteful because they are too poor—it deprives them of capital and opportunities which would make them more efficient producers. It thus greatly diminishes production.

D. The unjust distribution which is giving us the hundred-fold millionaire on the one side and the tramp and pauper on the other, generates thieves, gamblers, social parasites of all kinds, and requires larger expenditures of money and energy in watchmen, policemen, courts, prisons and other means of defense and repression. It kindles a greed of gain and a worship of wealth, and produces a bitter struggle for existence which fosters drunkenness, increases insanity and causes men whose energies ought to be devoted to honest production to spend their time and strength in cheating and

grabbing from each other. Besides the moral loss, all this involves an enormous economic loss which the single tax would save.

E. The taxes we would abolish fall most heavily on the poorer agricultural districts, and thus tend to drive population and wealth from them to the great cities. The tax we would increase would destroy that monopoly of land which is the great cause of that distribution of population which is crowding people too closely together in some places and scattering them too far apart in other places. Families live on top of one another in cities because of the enormous speculative prices at which vacant lots are held. In the country they are scattered too far apart for social intercourse and convenience, because instead of each taking what land he can use, every one who can grab all he can get, in the hope of profiting by the increase of value, and the next man must pass farther on. Thus we have scores of families living under a single roof, and other families living in dug-outs on the prairies far from neighbors—some living too close to each other for moral, mental or physical health, and others too far separated for the stimulating and refining influences of society. The wastes in health, in mental vigor and in unnecessary transportation result in great economic losses which the single tax would save.

II.

Let us turn to the moral side and consider the question of justice.

The right of property does not rest on human laws; they have often ignored and violated it. It rests on natural laws—that is to say, the law of God. It is clear and absolute, and every violation of it, whether committed by a man or a nation, is a violation of the command: "Thou shalt not steal." The man who catches a fish, grows an apple, raises a calf, builds a house, makes a coat, paints a picture, constructs a machine, has, as to any such thing, an exclusive right to ownership, which carries with it the right to give, to sell, or bequeath that thing. But who made the earth that any man can claim such ownership of it, or any part of it, or the right to give, sell, or bequeath it? Since the earth was not made by us, but is only the temporary dwelling place on which one generation of men follows another; since we who find ourselves here are manifestly here with the equal permission of the Creator, it is manifest that no one can have any exclusive right of ownership in land, and that the rights of all men to land must be equal and

inalienable. There must be an exclusive right to possession of land, for the man who uses it must have secure possession of land in order to reap the products of his labor. But this right of possession must be limited by the equal right of all, and should therefore be conditioned on the payment to the community by the possessor of an equivalent for any special valuable privilege thus accorded him.

When we tax houses, crops, money, furniture, capital, or wealth in any of its forms, we take from individuals what rightfully belongs to them. We violate the right of property, and in the name of the state commit robbery. But when we tax ground values we take from individuals what does not belong to them, but belongs to the community, and which cannot be left to individuals without the robbery of other individuals.

Think what the value of land is. It has no reference to the cost of production, as has the value of houses, horses, ships, clothes, or other things produced by labor; for land is not produced by man, it has been created by God. The value of land does not come from the exertion of labor on land, for the value thus produced is a value of improvement. That value that attaches to any piece of land means that that piece of land is more desirable than the land which other citizens may obtain, and that there are more willing to pay a premium for permission to use it. Justice, therefore, requires that this premium or value shall be taken for the benefit of all in order to secure to all their equal rights.

Consider the difference between the value of a building and the value of land. The value of a building, like the value of goods, or of anything properly styled wealth, is produced by individual exertion, and therefore properly belongs to the individual; but the value of land only arises with the growth and improvements of the community, and therefore properly belongs to the community. It is not because of what its owners have done, but because of the presence of the whole great population, that land in New York is worth millions an acre. This value, therefore, is the proper fund for defraying the common expense of the whole population, and it must be taken for public use, under penalty of generating land speculation and monopoly which will bring about artificial scarcity where the Creator has provided in abundance for all whom His providence has called into existence. It is thus a violation of justice to tax labor, or the things pro-

duced by labor, and it is also a violation of justice not to tax land values.

These are the fundamental reasons for which we urge the single tax, believing it to be the greatest and most fundamental of all reforms. We do not think it will change human nature. That man can never do; but it will bring about conditions in which human nature can develop what is best, instead of, as now in many cases, what is worst. It will permit such enormous production of wealth as we can now hardly conceive. It will secure an equitable distribution. It will solve the labor problem, and dispel the darkening clouds which are now gathering over the horizon of our civilization. It will make undeserved poverty an unknown thing. It will check the soul-destroying greed of gain. It will enable men to be at least as honest, as true, as considerate, and as high-minded as they would like to be. It will remove temptations to lying, false swearing, bribery and law-breaking. It will open to all, even to the poorest, the comforts and refinements and opportunities of an advancing civilization. It will thus, so we reverently believe, clear the way for the coming of that kingdom of right and justice, and consequently of abundance and peace and happiness, for which the Master told His disciples to pray and work. It is not because it is a promising invention, or cunning device that we look for the single tax to do all this; it is because it involves a conforming of the most fundamental adjustments of society to the supreme law of justice, because it involves the basing of the most important of our laws on the principle that we should do to others as we would be done by.

Mother—Willie, you must stop asking your papa questions. Don't you see they annoy him?

Willie—No, ma'am; it ain't my questions that annoy him, it's the answers he can't give that make him mad.—Philadelphia Press.

BOOKS

USURY FOR LOANS.

Under the title of "Usury: a Scriptural, Ethical and Economic View" (The Anti-Usury League, Millersburg, Ohio), Calvin Elliott offers a fresh discussion of this ancient but still restless question.

By usury the author does not mean interest in excess of the legal rate, but "any increase of a loan, great or small, whether authorized or forbidden by the civil state." This, as he truly says, is the classical meaning of the

term, the distinction between "interest" and "usury" having come in as a legal term with the sanction by Christian nations of limited premiums upon loans.

Mr. Elliott's presentation of scriptural and ecclesiastical authority is sufficiently full for so small a volume (292 pages), and his assertion of human rights is unequivocal. Yet he does not make out an ethical or economic case against usury as he defines it—that is, as premiums on loans. In his strongest anti-usury arguments he is evidently thinking of a power the lender invokes for purposes of extortion, which is different from and more fundamental than any power possessed by lenders as such. For instance:

The usurer, who has himself no rights against his fellows, uses a thing, his property, as an instrument or weapon to command service. He may place his hand upon every material thing another must have, and withhold it, and the other is shut up and compelled, he has no alternative. He must yield to the demands or suffer.

Now the power here does not reside in the transaction of borrowing and lending; it resides in institutions which allow some men, whether lenders or not, to shut their fellows up by withholding from them material things which by nature belong to all.

So far as borrowing and lending transactions are concerned, if carried on in freedom—and that is of the essence of the usury question as one of borrowing and lending—it is very difficult to see how Mr. Elliott's conclusions are consistent with some of his truest principles. He says that "the vital energy of man is his own and his right to it must be regarded. . . . He has a right to his own vital energy, and to all that his own vital force produces. He has a right to his property, inherited, earned or however secured, except by fraud. He has no claim against the vital energy of his fellow man, nor has he any claim whatever against the property of another." All this is true, provided the meaning of "property" be limited to things that are justly subject to appropriation. But being true it refutes all the author's anti-usury arguments—usury being understood to mean premiums on loans. If every man "has a right to his own vital energy and to all that his own vital energy produces," then he has the right to fix the terms upon which he will lend what his vital energy produces. And if no man has a "claim against the vital energy of his fellow man," then no man has a right to exact a loan upon any terms whatever. Borrower and lender must agree, or there is no transaction. If they are left in freedom, usury may be exacted and conceded or it may not be, but in either case the contract must stand as that of a free bargain between free men.

But Mr. Elliott does not confine himself to his definition of usury. He goes altogether outside of the sphere of borrowing and lending, maintaining his

thesis by the somewhat transparent, though doubtless unintentional device, of referring to transactions as loans which are essentially not loans. He treats excessive street car charges, for instance, as usurious, when in fact the extortion there does not at all depend upon transactions that can properly be called lending. They depend upon public franchises, whereby private concerns monopolize public highways. Likewise he treats the so-called "unearned increment" of land as usury, upon the false assumption that it results from renting.

It would seem that Mr. Elliott has tried to generalize all the social evils of the time under the one head of "usury." Possibly that might be done, but the definition of "usury" would have to be more inclusive than "any increase of a loan."

PERIODICALS.

One of Frederic C. Howe's best papers on cities at large, appears in the World's Work for October under the title "Cleveland—A City Finding Itself."

One way of pushing a book is set forth in an article in Harper's Weekly of Oct. 3. A letter is given from the "Publishers" asking "permission to quote whatever you may say in appreciation of its subtle psychological grasp" etc.; and "such a letter," we are told, "is apt to be followed or preceded by a more personal appeal from the writer of the book, insinuating a desire parallel with the publishers' for such a recognition of its merit as may be promptly turned into an advertisement." J. H. D.

The Outlook for Oct. 3, speaking of the Ohio campaign, calls it the most important of the year, and says that "On state issues the Republican leaders have not shown the vigor and determination of their opponent." The writer thinks that the Republican majority of ninety thousand will be reduced, and that Mr. Herrick's cry against the single tax is not likely seriously to influence the electorate. In this number of the Outlook there is an interesting illustrated article on Jonathan Edwards, and another on Tolstoy's Marriage and Family Life. J. H. D.

The Literary Digest of Oct. 3 gives prominence to an article on Sleep in Popular Science for August. To any one reading the article, it must appear how entirely ignorant the most pretentious scientist is on this most commonplace and familiar phenomenon. It is another illustration of the utter failure of science to remove the mystery from life. What can any one, however learned he may be, ever know of the condition of brain-cells during sleep? We have got so used to listening with our mouths open to wise-sounding talk about this and that sort of cells that we do not stop to think how absurd most of the talk really is. J. H. D.

The New York Independent of Sept. 24 has a brief but significant article by Goldwin Smith on the "Strenuous Life." In a gentle way the distinguished writer suggests that President Roosevelt's preaching on this subject is somewhat responsible for the spirit of violence just now abroad, or at least that it tends that way. He holds that it is difficult, however, to fix upon the cause of the recrudescence of this spirit in the world. "It may be," he says, "the prevalence of physical theories of evolution by survival of the fittest, the fittest being taken to mean the strongest—which it does not so far as the human race is concerned." Mr. Smith maintains that the greatest effects in the history of civilization have been produced by men who would not come within Mr. Roosevelt's purview of strenuousity. J. H. D.

Mr. Eltweed Pomeroy, president of the National Direct Legislation League, has a one-page article of interest and importance