

Mr. Samuel Gompers Replies to Our Criticism

MR. JOSEPH DANA MILLER,

DEAR SIR:

In the January-February issue of the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW* there is published a letter by you addressed to me. I really regret that you did not see the wisdom or the amenities between man and man and address the letter to me for consideration and reply, but that you deemed it proper to publish the letter in the *REVIEW* without even doing me the courtesy or giving me the opportunity of seeing it before publication and replying thereto. Perhaps that may be your view of proprieties and depending upon me to get your letter through an indirect source. However, dismissing this from consideration let me make the following observations.

When working at my trade in a factory, the *Irish World*, a New York weekly, published chapters in each of its issues of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty." These chapters were read aloud each week affording the major part of the discussion among the men. It was due to a few of my friends and myself that the chapters were read and discussed in the Spirit-and-Light Club of Brooklyn, New York, of which I was a member. Combined efforts of all were directed in being helpful in having the work "Progress and Poverty" done into a book. Later, we were helpful in having "Progress and Poverty" printed in the *Congressional Record*. Perhaps these facts might justify my statement that I aided in having Henry George understood.

I aided in the nomination of Henry George in his campaign for mayor of New York and in the campaign in the election. It was he who induced me to buy a bicycle and on our machines we frequently, and particularly on Sunday, took long rides at which most interesting discussions took place and there was established between us a very firm friendship. I have declared and now say that I am a Single Taxer. I believe the Single Tax to be the most practical, effective and generally advantageous tax which can be imposed, but you take me to task because in my article on "Abolish Unemployment" I did not declare for the Single Tax as a remedy for unemployment.

All I need say in reply is that the organized labor movement cannot wait for the establishment of the Single Tax system to have our unemployed workmen at work.

"While the grass grows, etc," Shakespeare in his time declared that proverb somewhat musty and yet its lesson is as potent today as when the phrase was coined. One of my dear friends for many years a Single Taxer after reading your letter in the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW* stated to me "The worst about the Single Tax is the Single Taxer." Is it difficult to imagine the type of man he had in mind?

Very truly yours,

SAM GOMPERS,
President,
American Federation of Labor.

The article to which the foregoing letter of Mr. Gompers refers was a criticism in our last issue of a contribution appearing under his own name in the *American Federationist*, dealing with the question of unemployment. The criticism was entitled "A Few Words with Mr. Gompers." It was a review of the article which Mr. Gompers had written, accompanied with some running comments on what appeared to be that gentleman's shortcomings.

Mr. Gompers is a public man. His public utterances are subject to only so much consideration as their importance calls for. We were under no obligation to submit our criticism in advance of publication, or to extend to Mr. Gompers the special privilege of having his reply printed in the same issue in which the criticism appeared. All that is required of editorial courtesy is that the columns of the paper shall be open to reply. This reply is now before us. It is printed herewith, so that our readers may hear his side. He has the liberty of using our columns for further explanation of his position. So much for the "amenities."

The article by Mr. Gompers urged upon government the need of providing employment. As Mr. Gompers has on several occasions declared himself a Single Taxer we looked—but looked in vain—for some recognition of the real solution of unemployment, some suggestion, if but the faintest, of the primary relation of the question of unemployment to the land laws of the country. We did not find it. Why not?

We pointed out that the sole burden of Mr. Gompers' article was the *necessity of speeding up of public improvements*. Incredible as it may seem, this was all that, purged of its somewhat rotund phraseology, the article disclosed. It is true that the words were brave and breathed defiance to some powers or persons or things the identity of which remains concealed. But with supreme unconsciousness that he had proposed nothing that can solve the unemployment question, Mr. Gompers concludes with this triumphant exordium, almost shouting: "The problem can be solved. It must be solved. The time for action and solution is not tomorrow, but Now!"

We called attention to the phrases which Mr. Gompers used, "cyclical unemployment," "seasonal unemployment," when the only fact under consideration is a man willing to work and unable to find it. I have called the use of such phrases "criminal trifling." Perhaps the term was too harsh, but if Mr. Gompers is a Single Taxer—and he says he is—he knows how inadequate are such phrases. He talked of "forms of unemployment," as if being out of a job were capable of classification. He quoted, apparently by way of endorsement, the language of Mr. Hoover that a solution of unemployment might be found through "the mobilization of the fine co-operative action of our manufacturers and employers, our public bodies and our local authorities." "The mobilization of fine co-operative action" is a "mouthful," as the boys say. But it is a meaningless abracadabra. It is a fine bit of Hooverism, and successfully conceals the poverty of that gentleman's thought. Yet Mr. Gompers cites it—and apparently finds it good. Worse still, he endorses President Harding's statement that "a million and a half are normally unemployed" in these United States. Whether Mr. Harding used the word "normally" in this case in the sense of usually or naturally, is doubtful. But it fails to arrest the attention of Mr.