

Self-Interest vs Religious Conscience

By F. T. Hodgkiss

I wonder how many now remember Jerry Simpson "the Sockless Senator," who declared publicly he would not wear socks 'till the duty was taken off wool? I lived four years in the United States (am a Londoner), two years in New York City where I saw much of Benjamin Doblin, heard Dr. McGlynn, and was a voluntary worker at the convention in Cooper Union when we welcomed Henry George on his return from his Australian campaign, and I listened to him taking part with colleagues in forming a platform. I was desk companion with Max Hirsch for seven years when he was editor, and I was business manager, of the BEACON, a Georgist monthly; and I was editor of PROGRESS until two years ago.

I am sorry we here in Australia have not set the world a better example in our Land Rent legislation. Through being in too great a hurry we have worked for "Land Tax" and for what George denounced as "intelligent self-interest," instead of for what he proclaimed could "be carried by nothing less than the religious conscience." (Chapter II, The Condition of Labour.) We thus handed the cause over to politicians with their Pennies Taxation, graduations and exemptions. This "Rating Reform" is now building up a new army of resisters to progress towards our goal, being also based upon appeals founded on "intelligent self-interest."

The great world evil portrayed in "Whose World," which I have just read, is greater than one concerning only those who are paying Rates. The principle is correct but there is a vastly greater issue, the moral one, concerning the world's masses having equal access to

land. I pray we rise to the situation and are faithful stewards in spreading its message widely abroad.

Brighton Australia.