

A Message to Single Taxers

GERRIT JOHNSON PLANS FUTURE WORK AND ASKS CO-OPERATION

THIS train, going at a terrific speed from California to Michigan, gives me just the right kind of a swing to write a general letter to Single Taxers.

Having gone over the State from San Diego to San Francisco, I think it safe to say that 99% of California Single Taxers are in favor of a "get-together" movement. What they will do after that, I do not know, but I maintain that they should settle their own difficulties without outside interference. What I would like to impress upon you is this—that there is not one good healthy Single Tax organization in California, neither under the name "Great Adventure" nor any other name. All in all, there are over one hundred Single Taxers in the whole State; I mean those who make a pretension at understanding the philosophy of Henry George. Yet, in spite of that, anything that looks like land reform, will get from one hundred thousand to three hundred thousand votes. The truth of the matter is, these voters will vote for any kind of an amendment, whether it is inside out or upside down; they simply want to get somewhere and not one cares who is ahead or behind the movement. We are not leaders; the crowd is ahead of us. When I see little groups of Single Taxers who cannot possibly get a quorum at their meetings, making claim to all these votes, I think they are funny.

THE CONSERVATIVES OF YESTERDAY THE RADICALS OF TODAY

As we look the world over, we must begin to realize that yesterday was different from today. Those who were considered conservatives yesterday may be radicals today and the radicals of yesterday may think that Single Tax is tame today. We all seem to be moving on. We may be feeling the heart throb of the New Force that seems to be sweeping the earth. Nothing today is stationary. We should not place our dependence on what was, but what is.

I have a great many letters from people who say they want straight Single Tax or nothing. They call themselves "Radicals." I attended a meeting at Los Angeles. These are the ones whom the radicals call "conservatives" and I suggested to them the advisability of an exemption clause in their next bill and they sat down on me like a thousand of brick. They want straight Single Tax as laid down by Henry George, or nothing. When I see these people so far apart and yet so close together, I get confused. I am anxious to get the "Great Adventure" and "Single Tax Clubs," together because as they are now, I think they are blocking the way to free land. When Henry George was with us, he drew a circle that took us all in, but since his day our minds seem to have become warped and we have drawn circles the size of our minds, that leave some out.

WHO ARE THE RESPECTABLE?

During the time of Henry George, Dr. McGlynn and John Swinton, we did not hear a great deal about "Single Tax" but the slogan, as I remember it, was "Anti-Poverty" and the masses heard it. The call had a soul. We did not hear much about philosophy or unearned increment. "Anti-Poverty" meant bread and butter. Since that time, which way have we been drifting? We have become respectables, moralists, martyrs and book-worms. I probably could claim the distinction of having read less of Henry George than any other Single Taxer, but I think I could also claim the distinction of having visited more slum districts, potters' fields, prisons and poor houses than any other Single Taxer. I read "Progress and Poverty" that is printed on the faces of the passers-by. I do not care what Henry George said, nor just how he said it, but I think I know what he wanted. He wanted to place as heavy a burden as possible on land values, thereby making land speculation unprofitable. Then if a man wanted a piece of land, he could go to Uncle Sam instead of the Landlord. Land would be as free as the air and we could have all we could actually use. We are going to do this just as soon as we get through being martyrs, respectables or moralists, and become practical. Did you ever go to a Single Tax meeting and have someone tell you how many years he had suffered for the cause? That stuff may be good for those who need sympathy but it is poor propaganda. No one gets interested in a movement that spells "trouble." Then we wonder why our clubs do not grow. One thing we ought to understand is, that if we talk Single Tax when we ought to be sawing wood, we should not look for sympathy or blame others if we run out of wood.

At one meeting in California which I attended, practically the whole evening was spent with the question that we ought to convert the clergy and bankers to our viewpoint so as to give us an air of respectability. Of course, I realize that my early training stands in the way of my seeing its importance. When I see people with an air of respectability, it makes me laugh, for it is usually very thin air, and you can see right through it. Should not one have character to be respectable? I look the world over and what would have happened if all the respectable clergymen from the warring nations had the character of Leibeicht or Debs. While my sympathy goes out towards the clergy, knowing that they too are victims of our social condition the same as the rest of us, still if we have to take their air just to give us a polish, we must be very dull.

Then there is the banker. Are we going to pat his head like a dog from whom we want to take a bone? I think we Single Taxers are funny. We talk about freeing the land and then we want to stop and convert the banker. We do not seem to know that the reason we cannot convert the banker is because he realizes what Single Tax would do to him better than we do. The banker has most of his money loaned out on inflated land values. If Single Tax squeezes out this artificial value, he would have an awful time saving himself and if he did get his money,

what could he do with it? Money is just the same as labor—just as soon as there is more than the demand down goes rate of interest. Yes, the banker is right. It would lessen the power of money and raise the devil with the non-producing class. It seems to me we are either ignorant or dishonest in wanting to convert the banker.

WE CANNOT LIVE UP TO OUR IDEALS

At one of the Single Tax clubs in California I was confronted with this problem: This club had a clause in their by-laws barring anyone not in good moral standing. (Any of the stuff that runs from this pen is not intended as personal criticism, but only to show which way we are drifting.) When Henry George said "I am for men," I wonder what he meant? Of course, I realize that college graduates and we who graduate from the street, have different viewpoints. Our code of morals is life as we see it. We feel and absorb as we go along. The hand-me-down, ready-made morals, guaranteed easy to wear, do not interest us. We know that anyone who tries to live up to high ideals either lands in jail or the poor house.

Talking about morals; come with me to one of the Los Angeles jails. You will find there the same conditions as in most cities. Upton Sinclair properly called it the "Louse Ranch." They had twenty-seven women locked in a little place where there was only room for ten. They were surrounded by four tiers of iron bars, no sun-light, and the air was foul. One of these girls told me she had been there 220 days and did not know when she would get out. In that city where so many profiteers come to spend part of their gains, she had seen their vulgar display of wealth and had been tempted and took some money from her employer. While she was telling her story, the newsboys on the streets were calling "Extra, Extra." The Mayor of the city had just been indicted by the Grand Jury and certain other officials were either in hiding or fleeing. They were accused of grafting thousands upon thousands of dollars as rake-off from prostitutes and gambling holes. These were the guardians who had sent and were keeping this girl in jail so as to improve her morals.

OTHER TYPICAL LOS ANGELES INSTITUTIONS

One block from where I lived in Los Angeles, there is a moral factory or temple. It is said to have cost from one to two million dollars. Its architecture is a poem in marble. On the inside the color scheme is so soothing, the music so harmonious, that anyone who can walk over the bodies of their dead brothers and can turn a deaf ear to the cries of the helpless, can get a spiritual uplift there. There they tell that Jesus said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and also "As you do unto the least of these, so do you unto Me."

I also visited the Juvenile Home. This is the place where Los Angeles takes care of its waifs. It has 165 inmates. It is surrounded by an ugly, high board fence, topped off by barbed wire. You hear the rattle of keys before you enter. Every few steps a door is unlocked and

locked. All they see is bars and all they hear is the rattle of keys. Is it any wonder we street graduates laugh at parlor reformers who talk so wisely about mental suggestion and fear thought?

Just follow me through this place. The guide unlocked the door of one small room and in it was a little six-year old boy all alone. When we entered he was sitting on a narrow window sill with his little hands clutching the iron bars, trying to get a look at the great out-doors. I wish I could picture the look on that child's face as we entered. I had picked up a wounded bird the morning before and felt its heart beat, and its eyes looked just as pitiful and helpless as did this little boy's. Were you ever six years old? Have you anyone at that age who is near and dear to you? Just imagine some morning a machine driving up to take you away from home. No matter how humble your abode; it is the only home and friends that you know. A strange man takes you to this strange house with its ugly fence and barred windows and among these strange people. The first thing they do is to run an instrument into your mouth to take your blood culture; then they run a needle into your arm to draw blood for a test; then they lock you up by yourself for from eight to twelve hours. Can't you see this damned hypocrisy? If this kid had belonged to any one of these people who talk to me about "As you do unto the least of these," they would have had a fit. Religion to the rich means simply taking a hypodermic filled with selfishness which gives them that contented feeling. When I left that Juvenile Home, I had to pass this beautiful temple on my way home. I wondered if Jesus should come back to earth, would he come to this church or would He go to that little boy? No, do not blame anyone for this condition. The reason we are such hypocrites is because we have let the rich control our religion, our education and our literature, and as long as they can keep us satisfied with our present understanding of morals, they are safe with their plunder.

THE TROUBLE NOT WITH MANKIND BUT WITH THE LAWS

I also visited the Los Vegas Hospital with its forty-five inmates. This is where the city of Los Angeles keeps young women who are without money, suffering from venereal disease. These are the ones caught by the police. In this city of womens' clubs and where women vote, they only lock up the women; the men who are the cause of their condition, are allowed to run around loose. Talk about morals! The trouble is not with these girls but with our social conditions. We are either blind, ignorant or indecent. We dare not face the devil in his lair. Millions of men and women would like companionship and home, but with the price of land where it is, it means the struggle of a life time with a mortgage to buy a home, and it is like putting one's head in a noose to marry. We should face facts and know that as long as men make laws that interfere with the laws of nature, we will have prostitution. Just as soon as we have brains enough to free the land so that man will have

the same right to live as the birds of the air, then, and not until then, will Los Vegas Hospitals disappear.

How are we going to get it? May I give you my viewpoint? If we ever get back the land, we will have to free it in the same way that we lost it. Millionaires know the power of what they call "Law." Laws are made by the rich to skin the poor and now the poor must make laws to skin the rich. When Rockefeller and Morgan want something, they do not tell you bluntly what they want, they put it up in nice packages so that it is easy to take and we do not know we have taken anything until it lies on our stomachs and commences to work. Henry George had the idea, but I too would put it up in a nice package and instead of being afraid of the thing, I would have them smacking their lips. Why would I do that? Because I believe Henry George's philosophy the most radical doctrine ever presented by man. It is the most dangerous to our present understanding of civilization. That is why I am for it. I do not think that 10% of the professional Single Taxers realize how dangerous it is. That is why so many Single Taxers hunt their holes when some try to put it over. But let's get down to business.

THE KIND OF A BILL MR. JOHNSON FAVORS

In this Single Tax bill I would put an exemption clause up to \$5,000. I think it safe to say that 90% of the homes in California are under that figure. I would get their votes; I would know that the more I sliced off the bottom, the heavier would be the load on the top. I realize that every human being is selfish. No, that is not natural, but the result of our training from the powers that be. I would tax all franchises, stocks, bonds, incomes and inheritances. I would abolish all improvement and personal taxes, and take the full rental value of land. In this same bill I would draft a real mothers' pension and a sixty-year age pension; I would pension every disabled man, woman or child; I would open up labor bureaus all over the State and if I could not furnish a job, the applicant would get a suitable out-of-work benefit. I would get someone with brains to draft this and more too, all in one bill. You say that would be class legislation. I know it, but it would be for a class that has never enjoyed class legislation before. You say if we have Single Tax we will not need these side issues. You know that, but the voter may not, and besides every human being has pride, and when he finds that he does not need them, he won't want them. I would not call it Single Tax, but I would give it a new name that would stir the heart.

I have gone through one straight Single Tax campaign and never again for me. I have seen the Landlord get up before his audience and tell them that the Single Tax is going to take the tax off all corporations, stocks and bonds, incomes and inheritances, and I have watched their faces. I tell you straight Single Taxers, while you have the truth, the Landlord gets the vote and you can talk until your whiskers touch the ground, and you will be just where you are today. I hear you say, "We have the truth and truth must prevail!" We are so innocent, like the babes in the

wood. That is the dope Rockefellers and Morgans have whispered in our ears for ages and as long as we keep on repeating that, they are safe.

Just look at our United States Senate, Congress and State Legislatures. It is just one stinking cesspool and we are all liars and thieves. This game called "Life" is a real game and we have to play it as it is and not as we wish it. I know that in spite of our civilization there is still some good in every human, or, let me say, a germ within him that cries for Justice, and it is hidden in the chord that leads to the heart. I would have someone play upon that chord that they might feel and hear the harmony that will prevail when we bring about the "perfect day."

Yours for a better world,

GERRIT J. JOHNSON.

P. S.—Here's where you come in. I want Names NAMES, LOTS OF NAMES. I would like the names of everyone thinking along our line. I have a big list now, but should have 100,000. They would act as the silent partners in this New World Movement. What do I mean by "The New World Movement?" Just pick up this little earth of ours. Do you feel it vibrate? We have just fertilized it with 10,000,000 of our best blood and 20,000,000 bleeding hearts which have pregated the earth. The noise that we hear some call "The howling of the mob" may be caused by Mother Nature giving birth to a New World. With proper cultivation, it will bring forth fruit which they who are the cause of these deaths and bleeding hearts, least expect.

Do you hear and feel the tread of this powerful and invisible army as it approaches? It is commanded by a Real God, not the God of the Czars, Kaisers, Kings, Rockefellers and Morgans, but the God of Justice is working his way out.

Send me names of people who will want to be in the vanguard of this voluntary army with a safe and sane remedy. Send me NAMES NOW, this very minute. Send me NAMES. Mail them to Gerrit J. Johnson, 547 Sheldon Ave., Grand Rapids, Mich.