

republican. Our Government has, fairly enough, been called an "invisible government." The number of our real rulers may not be more than in Russia or Italy—probably less than in England. There is not and never has been any such thing as a "government of the people, by the people, for the people" anywhere, at any time. It is a non-existent trinity. The most to be sought—or even hoped for—is government for the people. \* \* \*

There is no visible sign that we shall substantially limit the present opportunities for predatory wealth, cut down the existing methods of exploitation, both of productive labor and of natural resources. "Individualism," as its proponents really mean it, connotes keeping essentially all of the outstanding methods of heaping up large fortunes and excessive, unearned incomes. We have no respect for property rights grounded on productive work only. Getting—not producing—we regard as sacred under our Constitution. "Normalcy" with us is a predatory and aleatory capitalism. Instead of promoting individualism and personal incentive of an honest and wholesome kind, it is discouraged. A "rugged individualism" is not legitimately grounded on gambling chances for acquiring unearned natural resources, properties socially created, or properties produced by others. An economic system in which property rights should be approximately grounded on useful work, not inconsistent with social welfare, might be called either capitalistic or socialistic, but it would be a tolerant organization and infinitely preferable to our present chaotic and grossly unjust "American system," which does not work.

Evolution to a better system—not revolution—is the desideratum. Revolutions ordinarily are but new forms of chaos and waste; evolution, though frequently slow and disappointing, is generally constructive.

## Death of Gerrit Johnson

THE Single Tax movement has lost a great and good friend in the death of Gerrit Johnson, whose gifts to the cause for the last fifteen years must total a large sum.

He died in Los Angeles, where he was accustomed to spend the winters, on March 15. He maintained his residence in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was a cripple, but it was not his own affliction but the maladies of the world which drew from him that whole-hearted sympathy which animated the man. But he did not stop with mere expressions of sympathy. To "Luke North" during his several campaigns he gave generously. To the Fels Fund he made many gifts. To LAND AND FREEDOM he was a liberal giver. Indeed, it is impossible to catalogue the activities for which when he approved of them his purse was not opened.

He held advanced ideas. Even as to the Georgist principles he was many steps in advance of those who favor more or less cautious approaches to the desired goal. His contributions to the Grand Rapids papers rang like bullets, and he had a style of expression that lent strength to his appeals for the doctrines he espoused.

Yet he was a gentle man withal, of a certain modest reticence, and rarely given to idle talk. A very serious man, who felt deeply, thought seriously.

He was, too, a successful business man. A native of the Netherlands, he was brought to Grand Rapids by his parents when he was nine years of age. He learned the

cigar making trade, and in 1884 started in business for himself. He was widely known for his expert knowledge of tobaccos and was one of the first to import Java wrappers. He was the creator of the "Dutch Masters" cigar, though he had originated quite a number of other well-known brands. In 1919 he retired from business. He was sixty-eight when he died. The movement has lost one of its great souls.

Not long before his death he contributed to the *Michigan Tradesman* an article entitled "The Cause of Crime," from which we quote the following:

How well I remember some years ago before I had read Henry George's "Progress and Poverty." I then still belonged to the sob-sister class and was filled with the missionary zeal, ranting about the horrible conditions of our Kent County jail and poorhouse. I was then so unsophisticated that I still thought we could treat our unfortunates decently. In my innocence I did not know that "doing unto others as you would have them do unto you" was a physical impossibility under our present economic system. I did not know that what we call Christian civilization depended upon brutality and not upon love. Do you not see that if we treated our unfortunates as we ourselves would like to be treated there would be such an influx in our jails and poorhouses and the giving of charity that this whole Christendom would bust up in business.

I had some experience with a prison farm, and it was there I had my eye-teeth cut. I learned how futile it was to talk about reforming without taking into consideration economic questions. We pride ourselves on running a prison farm which was surrounded only by fence, the same as any other farm; no barred windows, no handcuffs no swords or pistols. This prison farm was void of any prison atmosphere and we had good food and beds. We did not have any trouble with men trying to break out, but we did have trouble keeping men from breaking in. Our prison farm was a success until the war broke out and as jobs became more plentiful prisoners became more scarce and then we had to pay men for working who formerly worked for nothing. The result was our prison farm busted up in business, and that experience convinced me that we can measure crime waves by the number of men out of jobs. Now when I see a reformer trying to walk in the footsteps of Jesus without attempting to straighten out our economic conditions I would liken him unto a man who is filled to the brim with bootleg trying to walk a crack. \* \* \*

Yet in spite of what I may have said I am still an optimist, with faith in the future, firmly believing that when we Americans get our political bearings we will be able to put our prisons and poorhouse in a museum to show the future generation what barbarians we were in this barbaric age.

POOR Irish folk came wandering over these moors. My dame makes it a rule to give to every son of Adam bread to eat, and supplies his wants to the next house. But here are thousands of acres which might give them all meat and nobody to bid these poor Irish go to the moor and till it. They burned the stacks, and so found a way to force the rich people to attend to them.

—CARLYLE (in Scotland), 1833.

LIBERTY consists in the right to do whatever is not contrary to the rights of others; thus exercise of the natural rights of each individual has no limits other than those which secure to other members of society enjoyment of the same rights.—THOMAS PAINE.