

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

THE *New York Evening Journal* says editorially: "Political economy is a difficult subject, one about which nobody really *knows* anything." And the average man reading all these learned treatises, and not thinking very deeply for himself, must conclude that this is so—that few of these fellows really know anything about the science they write about.

HERE, for example, is a book by Prof. W. C. Mitchell. The author is said to be "internationally famous as an expert on the business cycle." What is the business cycle? One of the chapters is entitled, "How Prosperity Breeds a Crisis." This is the way it does it. As prosperity increases wages rise and the cost of doing business increases. There is then a decline in efficiency because jobs are now more numerous than men, and men cannot therefore be driven at top speed. And when under the compulsion of prosperity press of orders occur, waste creeps in. And more of the same rubbish. When were jobs more numerous than men? And what are wages? And how can increase of real wages bring about a crisis that ends in the decline of prosperity and ensuing hard times?

THIS is the nonsense that gets into print, parades with ostentation, and is the subject of congratulatory comment from professors in their mutual admiration coteries. Each one professes to see some great illumination in so-and-so's discovery, but qualifies this praise with several "buts," as "perhaps this distinction has been overlooked." Then follows some elaboration or "improvement" on the point expounded by the learned professor, at which all the other professors express unbounded admiration for the writer and his critic, not forgetting to introduce some further refinements of their own. "I cannot believe it," said Alice. "Then shut your eyes and breathe hard," said the queen.

OUR good friend and Single Taxer, J. B. Chamberlain, of Kensington, Md., in a little publication of his own, *The Truth Teller*, writes as follows:

Political Economy is referred to as a science but the palaver of the professors and writers who get a living from the pretense of a superior knowledge of our social affairs is far from scientific. One of them writes: "The transference of property to those who have not earned it,

however, is quite a matter for regulation in the general interest, subject to the fact that a total prohibition of transference would seriously maim the central principle of property, viz: the right and need to realize a conception of well being relevant to the relation which makes the individual in society what he is." This is ridiculous or profound according to the disposition and intelligence of the audience. Fellow professors enthuse over its perspicacity and literary charm but a bright "fresh" refers to it as "the cat's pajamas."

Another tells us that: "It is of superlative importance to recognize that a complete acceptance of the private and acquisitive point of view is the only procedure possible in the analysis of the phenomena of society organized upon lines of individual activity for private gain."

This sort of nonsense is fed to students in our colleges to divert their attention from fundamental truth.

IF no one really knows anything about political economy as the *Journal* insists, then it is the fault of the teachers. For it is a simple science—at all events, in its essentials. It has been called "the science of getting a living." Its major factors are few and their relations entirely plain. The operation of the laws of rent, interest and wages is visible to all who will look. If speculation in land lays a heavy tribute upon labor and capital, thus tending to interrupt the progress of industry by a toll just sufficiently excessive to stop production, we have periods of industrial depression and the end of prosperity. There is no mystery about it. If some men get what they do not earn then those who earn must get less to live upon, less to move the wheels of industry, less wealth and capital, in short. In words of one syllable this can be taught to children by one who will essay the task and abandon this learned nonsense of "business cycles" and clouds of words that leave us gasping for breath.

ONE of the shrewdest political observers of England, "Senex," in the leading editorial in the *Middleton Guardian*, comments on the proposed political alliance consummated at the recent Cheltenham Co-operative Congress between the Labor party and the co-operators. The vote was 1960 in favor to 1843 opposed. The opponents of the resolution indicated that out of more than 1300 societies affiliated with the Co-operative Union only 600 were represented at the Congress.

THIS wise comment is made by "Senex": It may be fairly assumed that the combination with the Co-operationists will bring into the Socialist ranks a large element that is at heart essentially conservative; and this,

acting in sympathy with the middle class element, is certain to affect profoundly the mental outlook of the Labor party, which, under the influence of these new forces, will become more moderate, staid, respectable. Against this, however, there will be revolt, and the political kaleidoscope will become more many-colored and perplexing than it is today. In all probability there will be bitter disputes and desperate efforts for conciliation; incessant discussion and much tinkering with programmes; out of all which may come some clarification and growth of thought. For these reasons the new partnership seems to us rather an exhibit of tendencies well worthy of analysis than a mere political re-shuffle.

IT is inconceivable that the British Co-operative movement, which has attained such immense proportions, should be swallowed up by the Labor party, or that it should contemplate the effacement of those principles and policies which are among the very essentials of the co-operative movement. For though the British Labor party is only a union of incoherence, and though a speaker of the Labor party recently declared that there are 120 definitions of socialism, more than double the amount of the fifty-seven varieties supposed to exist in the United States, there is nevertheless something which is common to all socialistic proposals, and the British Labor party is definitely socialistic. That common characteristic is the minimizing of individual initiative, the extension of the powers of the state, and the consequent abridgement of the principle of voluntary co-operation on which the Co-operative movement depends.

IT is true that the British Labor party is not definitely socialistic any more than it is definitely anything else. But to the degree that it is socialistic its aims and purposes are opposed to the Co-operative movement. For that movement is "capitalistic," if you will—is profit sharing, and "profits" is a term abhorrent to your thorough going socialist. Above all it is not revolutionary, for its success is dependent upon orderly processes and recognized business methods. It has grown amazingly conservative—hence our very natural astonishment at the vote of the Congress even if the Co-operative movement were not adequately represented there.

WHETHER the Co-operators will now affect the policies of the Labor party, or whether the Labor party will react on the Co-operative movement, we shall have much interest in observing. It is an ill-assorted partnership and should trouble Ramsay Macdonald not a little. But he and his party will probably adopt what politicians call a middle "ground," which means that their principles will be "watered" a little while they indulge in friendly and acquiescent nods to co operators, trade unionists, Marxians and communists.

IN the meantime the Land Question grows ever more insistent. Politicians will ignore it as long as they can. The Lloyd Georges and the MacDonalds may keep it out of the political arena for a time, both being too cowardly to face it. They are wise in postponing its consideration as long as they can, for when the question of the centuries comes to be really an issue, when the hour strikes for the resumption by the people of their rights in the land, the politician and the deserter in their respective parties will find their occupations gone. They will be remembered only as politicians who played their minor parts in the prologue to a drama marking the death of an old civilization and the birth of a new.

A CORRESPONDENT takes us to task for calling Canberra a Single Tax city and points out that the twenty year re-appraisal of land values permits speculation in leases. This is true. But speculation under this system will hardly be as flagrant as under the freehold system. For under the leasing system of Canberra use must be made of the land.

Canberra is only a Single Tax city in intention—in actual practice it falls far short of the ideal. We should have preferred of course that freehold titles had been granted subject to a full rental tax in place of the leasehold system. Nevertheless, it is the nearest approach to ideal Georgism anywhere in the world. The government has done well according to its lights. It has fallen just short of the real principle. As Mr. Huie says in the *Standard*, of Sydney, Australia, "Our local reformers are not yet capable of teaching Henry George anything." They are not indeed.

IF you were asked what is the purpose of education would you not answer that its office was to enable you to minister to the minds of others, to enable others to share in all cultural advantages, to be able to convey to the young food for such intellectual hunger as you might be able to arouse in them? Would you not answer that the object of education was to enable you to participate more intimately in those indefinite yearnings for truth and justice which stir in the hearts of multitudes, to get at the secret of things, and to point the way to those that stumble in darkness for want of the guiding light that education of a real sort supplies?

BUT it appears that education is not at all that kind of thing, according to Prof. Hummer, Principal of the Binghamton, N. Y., Central High School. At the annual commencement exercises last June he told the pupils what education is: "It is the bootstrap by which you lift yourselves above the common herd." So education is to begin by teaching us to despise the commonality of mankind. In place of sympathy we are to preserve an intellectual aloofness; in place of knowledge of the latent aspirations of the average man, we are to seek