

Land and Freedom

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Current Comment

TO refrain from voting for what we believe in is a procedure of doubtful wisdom at any time. But deliberately to vote for what we are opposed to is a more amazing thing. We are thinking now of Single Taxers who are supporting La Follette. This is the curious spectacle to which we invite our readers' attention:

1st. Free trade Single Taxers supporting a high protectionist. La Follette has voted for nearly every high tariff measure that has been imposed in the last twenty years. He was a member of the Ways and Means Committee that reported the McKinley Bill and helped to make it a law.

2nd. Single Taxers whose doctrine is that of individualism and the natural law, supporting a socialist. For La Follette, while refusing to call himself a socialist, is a rigid regulationist, and the difference is negligible. Moreover he is leading the socialist party and thus cannot escape the responsibility.

3rd. Single Taxers who hate war, and know the causes from which it springs, and who opposed the Spanish-American and Philippine Wars, supporting a man who has voted for every war save the last one.

4th. Single Taxers who especially hate wars of aggression supporting a man who justified the war with the Filipinos who had loyally assisted us in the war with Spain, and justifying that war on the ground of the rich natural resources of the Philippines and the opportunities for trade that this war for conquest opened to us!

THIS is the extraordinary spectacle that is presented to us. Go back to the records. Hear this smug, and as we believe unscrupulous politician, who now assumes to lead the radical forces of the country. When the debate was raging on the question of what we should do with the islands, listen to this man whom some of our leading Single Taxers think worthy of their support. Contrast his attitude with that of brave Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts, always a stalwart party man. "It will not aid the discussion," said La Follette, almost sneeringly, "to indulge in eloquent speech on the priceless heritage of liberty * * * The only question is what shall we do with them" (the islands.) Conquest for profit did not scandalize the Senator; he proceeded to justify subjugation in the very manner of his friend, the Kaiser: "The market which the Philippines will afford the United States,

while amounting to many millions annually, is unimportant in contemplation of the value which will result from the Philippines as a point from which American products can command trade in the orient. From that point of vantage, with our harbors at Honolulu and in the Samoan group, for coaling, watering and repairing, we shall be ready to conquer our rightful share of that great market now opening for the world's commerce." And again: "For whatever ensues, under Republican construction of our plain treaty rights, we can legally and morally reserve unto ourselves perpetual commercial advantages of priceless value to our foreign trade for all time to come." How similar this language to that of every Junker chancellery of Europe.

TRIED by any test this man is unworthy of the support of any Single Taxer. He comes before the voters with no economic principles save those most abhorrent to the believer in the Georgian philosophy. His pet theory is the regulation of the citizen, which makes him, however coyly he may seek to disown it, a fit candidate for the socialist party. His open-mouthed admiration for the German government and the German system was always in evidence. He could hardly find words to express it. He could talk of the dominating powers of autocracy—and this always meant Wilson and his policies—but before the autocracy of the German system he fairly grovelled with phrases of adulation. Speaking of the devotion of the German people and the sacrifices they made to win the war, he cried: "What does it mean? It means, Sir, that they have a government over there that takes care of the German people from birth until they are able to enter the armies of the Kaiser." That is his ideal—a government that "takes care" of its people—by which he means that regulates their affairs, their industries, their going and coming, and in this he is essentially, in the economic theories he holds, a high tariff Socialist, which is everything the Georgian is not. And here we dismiss him, with the reflection that where the Commonwealth Land Party is on the ballot the Single Taxer who votes for La Follette and refuses to vote for William J. Wallace, is doing something worse than throwing away his vote—he is giving aid and comfort to the enemies of real democracy and the Georgian doctrine of economic freedom. He is voting against the principles he believes in and is helping, by just so much as his individual vote counts, to postpone their triumph.

READERS of LAND AND FREEDOM need no introduction to our old friend, John Moody. Mr. Moody is not a member of the Commonwealth Land Party, but he is one of the best informed men on economics and finance in the movement. We commend therefore to the supporters of La Follette his letter to the managers of that gentleman's campaign who solicited a contribution from Mr. Moody under the impression that, in common with a few well known Single Taxers, he would be found supporting his candidacy. We quote from Mr. Moody's letter:

Senator La Follette may be sincere, but if he is it is hard to believe that he is entirely sane. If he proposes to replace modern industrial society as it has been evolving in this country for the last hundred years by something better, he should produce a constructive programme of some kind before he starts the work of destroying what we have. While he is definite enough in his proposals for destruction, he is both vague and childish in his expressed ideas for construction. As a destroyer he goes to fundamentals, but as a builder he does not even scratch the surface. If monopoly in this country is as deep seated as he says, why does he not seek an equally deep-seated remedy instead of merely talking general platitudes about restoring the government to the people?

A LOS ANGELES paper gives an instance of profit from land speculation in the experience of one F. G. Baker. Mr. Baker purchased eleven years ago the southeast corner of Santa Monica and Fairfax Avenue in that city for \$1500. Last month he sold the same corner for \$70,000, making a profit of \$68,500. This is said to be a record price for Los Angeles real estate.

IN the meantime this evidence of "prosperity" is being advertised extensively by the fool newspapers of Los Angeles. The impending crash, of which there are signs all around in unemployment and vacant dwellings, is evidence only to the thoughtful few of the consequences that inevitably follow land booms. The organs of the privileged interests are whistling to keep up their courage. Los Angeles is just now a good city to keep away from. The boom has run its course and the bottom has fallen out. The blight is on.

IN a review of Mr. James Dundas White's "Land Value Policy," published by the United Committee of Great Britain, the *London Economist* says that "the book would have been improved if the author had seen fit to place his theoretical chapters first, explaining the nature of economic rent before proceeding to determine its proper treatment." "As a contribution to his list of "Notable Sayings" to the subject of land and its taxation we would," adds the *Economist*, "submit a remark made by a logically-minded little girl of five years, who in criticism of the suggestion that a certain piece of land belonged to the king,

asserted, with some finality, that this could not be so since His Majesty did not make it. On being reminded that property is sometimes acquired by purchase, she replied, "That's all nonsense. He didn't buy it from God, did he?"—thus pithily summarizing the basis of the land taxer's ethical position, with an exposition of which Mr. White might well have opened his treatise." The *Economist* is a very conservative journal of wide circulation. The age of the child might be a matter for question, but the story is good enough and not entirely unfamiliar. But from such a source, more than welcome!

THE Tax laws of Italy have been thoroughly revised this year. While they seem to be quite as complicated as ours, and also aimed at reaching all sorts of property and business transactions, there are two significant changes.

After January 1st, 1925, farm buildings will be exempt throughout Italy from national and local taxation; it seems that they have been exempt heretofore from local taxation in a number of provinces. And all buildings used as part of industrial plants, will be exempt from the real estate tax, though the income will be included in the total subject to income taxation. This change has been sought by industrial interests and will result in lower taxes.

From the U. S. Trade Information bulletin summarizing these changes, we extract the following:

* * * "The difficulty of estimating the total obligation incurred toward the Italian Government lies more in the application of the law than in the formal wording of the measure under which the tax is collected. A number of American companies have found it difficult to reconcile their own statement of profits with the view of the taxing authorities as to the percentage of profits to be taken as the basis of the collection of the tax." Which shows that Italy has as much trouble trying to "make the income tax work" as has the United States.

We notice also that a little subhead among the income tax "explanations" reads "Tax on Insane." Which isn't so much of a typographical error after all, when one stops to think. What more calculated to produce insanity than the income tax regulations—home or foreign. And maybe the poor compositor went crazy trying to figure it all out!

John W. Davis

STILL he has something of the eighteenth century about him. He puzzles over liberty as those intellectual aristocrats did. His greatest literary and political inspiration is a chapter of Henry George's on liberty. I dislike the word "gentleman," which sounds a bit snobbish in the very mixed company of modern life. But he is a fine gentleman, talking to fine gentlemen, and he never forgets it.—Washington Correspondent N. Y. *Evening Post*.