

The Henry George Congress

THE Henry George Congress on September 12, 13, and 14 at the Hotel Pennsylvania, in this city, has passed, but it will not soon be forgotten by those fortunate enough to be present. No more successful convention has been held in this city in many a long year; it was a brilliant and representative gathering of the faithful from many states; many of the addresses were of a high order of merit, and some were eloquently delivered. Practical suggestions for work were offered and discussed.

In the preparation of the programme all shades of Single Tax opinion as to methods were represented, and all phases of the great economic problem as related to our principle received adequate treatment from a host of speakers.

The high lights were the appearance of Father Huntington in his priestly robes and his thoughtful and uncompromising presentation of our great message; the eloquent speech of Frank Stephens at the banquet; the remarkable paper by Oscar Geiger which fittingly supplemented, though in different style and manner, the striking address of Father Huntington; the appearance on the platform of a youthful and growing figure in the movement, Charles LeBaron Goeller, who challenged the professors of economics on scientific grounds and aroused the intense interest of his audience with his illustrative charts and striking comments thereon; and lastly, the gathering at the tomb of the Prophet, where Mrs. Anna George deMille was no longer one of the distinguished figures of the movement but became transfigured as the little daughter of Henry George, leaning with her hand upon the stone, an inspiring and appealing figure whose simple manner carried us back over the lengthening years.

Called to order at 11 A. M. on Monday, the convention chairman, Joseph Dana Miller, asked Mr. W. E. Macklin to deliver the invocation, and followed with the opening address, which appears elsewhere. Mr. Edward Polak, former register of the Bronx, and once president of the Manhattan Single Tax Club, made the address of welcome, also printed in this issue, and the programme of the Second Annual Congress of the Henry George Foundation of America was under way.

George E. Evans, of Pittsburgh, president of the Foundation, said he felt humbled in the presence of so many of the saints. He was one of the younger men of the movement; he had become a convert to the Henry George doctrine only seven years ago. He made a plea for unification of effort by Single Taxers of all shades of opinion, since after all their aims were identical.

Mr. P. R. Williams, secretary of the Foundation, gave a brief resume of the activities of the past year, and thanked those who had come from distant points to attend the gathering. He thanked the committee who had cooperated with the officers of the Foundation, and referred gratefully

to the aid rendered by the members of the Schalkenbach Foundation, the Commonwealth Land party and other groups, in making this conference the success it promised to be.

MONDAY LUNCHEON

Miss Charlotte O. Schetter presided at the Monday noon luncheon. The diners listened to an address of Rev. S. G. Inman from South America, who said he felt as if he could address his hearers as "dear friends." He was privileged to be with us owing to his friendship with Dr. Macklin, of whose idealism he spoke in eloquent terms. Not long before he had stood on the spot where the rulers of the Incas once reigned, and he told how the land system of the Incas had been overthrown by the empire of their conquerors. Referring to Mexico he said Mexico had four cardinal sins, oil, copper, gold and silver, and there is a great evangelistic movement to rescue her from these sins.

Hon. George H. Duncan, member of the New Hampshire Legislature, secretary of the New Hampshire Special Recess Tax Commission, and field lecturer for the Henry George Lecture Association of Chicago, spoke in part as follows, his subject being "Practical Progress in Rational Taxation:"

Rational Taxation has made greater progress than most of us realize. If we search closely we shall find that in almost every state there is in operation some statute recognizing the principle that land and not improvements is benefited by community expenditure, that products of labor are restricted by taxation, or that natural resources are the property of the community and not of the individual. Sometimes these laws have been brought about by followers of Henry George and sometimes by sheer commonsense. In the first class come the generally-accepted special improvement taxes; in the second that partial exemption of buildings and full exemption of machinery and stocks-in-trade in Pittsburgh; and in the third the Minnesota ore-tax. If we will each seek out in our own community these examples and at every opportunity point out in a reasonable and friendly manner to those with whom we are associated their justice, it seems fair to expect that extensions of these principles will come quite rapidly.

Economic pressure is a strong reinforcer of true reform. We have known ever since we understood the Single Tax the unfortunate effect of the so-called general property tax. When community expenses were small, this effect was negligible. The recent tremendous increase in public expenses has accentuated this unfortunate effect, and the public generally is crying out blindly against the effect, without knowing the cause. So again, if we wisely stress the truth at every opportune time, we shall foster progress.

Above all, if we, each in his own way, are doing all we can for the cause we should not be discouraged if progress seems slow. The child must creep before it walks and the body politic, like the human body, cannot safely assimilate too large doses of even the correct medicine. The fifty years since Henry George wrote "Progress and Poverty" are but a short span in the history of the race.

MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

Carl D. Smith, of Pittsburgh, introduced Chas. H. Ingersoll as chairman of this session, who said he would confine himself to introducing Hon. George L. Record, of New Jersey. Mr. Record's address, which will be printed in next issue, aroused considerable discussion, in which Messrs. Stephens, Geiger, Polak and others took part. Mr. Record replied spiritedly to criticism and was followed by Mr. P. R. Williams, who explained the graded tax law of Pittsburgh and Scranton. Mr. Williams discussed the question with great candor, pointing out that it was in no wise the Single Tax but nevertheless furnished a good talking point.

Mr. Frank Stirlith followed with an account of the new Delaware campaign for the graded tax law in Wilmington. In the discussion that followed Messrs. Fraser, Pleydell, Williams, Macklin, DuBois and others took part.

Alfred N. Chandler spoke of the taxation work of the Merchants and Manufacturers League of New Jersey.

The public meeting on the evening of Monday is reported elsewhere, and the speeches given nearly verbatim.

TUESDAY MORNING

Bolton Hall spoke on the subject of "The Ways of the Workers" and the general discussion was participated in by Frank Stephens, James F. Morton, Will Atkinson, W. E. Macklin, Grace Isabel Colbron and others.

Rev. James O. S. Huntington spoke on the Single Tax as the first step toward freedom. Single Tax means opportunity. Opportunity has a close relation to liberty; if man has not opportunity he cannot realize the liberty that is necessary to progress. We have reached a period of standardization. We do things by set rules. We are more and more hemmed in by laws. The aim of the Single Tax is to liberate, so man may realize the best that is in him. Speaking further on standardization Father Huntington said too many men think alike; we have few outstanding personalities. And we are shut out from the real facts of life. The more and fuller the life of the individual the greater the life and variety of the community. The speaker dwelt eloquently on the high motives and lofty ideals of the disciples of Henry George. Father Huntington was given a rising vote of thanks. At this session Dr. Mark Milliken and Mr. Powell of Fairhope spoke, and Grace Isabel Colbron talked on Sex and Economics.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Hon. J. C. Lincoln presided at this session and Benjamin C. Marsh spoke in part as follows:

American agriculture is a sad and serious illustration of what happens to farmers when a nation goes wrong on its land policy. Granting subsidies on farm products, through a protective tariff, or made operative by a McNary-Haugen bill, or by direct payment from the Public Treasury advocated by the National Grange, the oldest farm organization, under the euphemistic title,

"export debentures," will only postpone a just and workable solution of the land problem and the adoption of efficient methods of farm production. It will in the long run mean more suffering for farmers, and particularly for farm women and children, for it would start another orgy of speculation in farm lands. New York City and Pittsburgh have partially exempted improvements from taxation, and their representatives at least should oppose any national legislation to foster more speculation in farm lands, until the States pleading with Congress for subsidies on farm products give proof that they are concerned for farmers as producers and not as land speculators, by exempting improvements from taxation, at least in part.

Farmers can never achieve financial independence by being legislated into the special privilege classes, which they have most vigorously and justly denounced. It is significant that the strongest plea for farm relief has come from large landed farmers, and bankers holding frozen mortgages on farms.

At the same time it should be recognized that the nation has stimulated the too rapid development of the farm plant and speculation in farm lands by its land grant, railroad and tariff policies, as well, we are forced to admit, by cheap credit to farmers. Farmers' mortgage and short-term debt is now probably over fifteen billion dollars—or approximately one-third of the selling price of farm land and buildings.

If farmers decide to try to get the special privileges they have hitherto denounced, they will be in even sadder straits than now because they cannot then effectively fight the special privileges from which they suffer. If they unite against speculation in land and credit for city as well as farm, against our present tariff policy, competitive operation of the railroads, and profiteering in natural resources, and work for efficiency in farm production, they will at least suffer less.

In the discussion that followed Messrs. Fraser, Kohler, Edwards and Miss Schetter and Dr. Macklin took part. This was followed by Oscar H. Geiger, who read his singularly able paper on "The Philosophy of Henry George." An advisory vote of those present was passed suggesting the printing of this essay in pamphlet form.

At this session James Bruce Lindsay spoke, saying that the time for pussyfooting had gone by and making a plea for the uncompromising presentation of our doctrines. A short time ago we got 12,000 votes in Ohio, with just enough money to get our ticket on the ballot and no money at all for propaganda or campaign expenses! George Lloyd also spoke and Mrs. Marietta Johnson talked interestingly of her methods of teaching as followed in her now famous school at Fairhope.

THE BANQUET

On Tuesday night 112 of the delegates attended the banquet. Frederic C. Howe presided. Lawson Purdy was the first speaker. He reviewed something of the history of tax methods in New York. He said he had had it in mind to speak of the attitude of Single Taxers in Henry George's time. We have got back of what is essential to the adoption of our principles. But have we advanced to the same degree on moral lines?

A few years ago we had a housing shortage. He had urged at that time a tax exemption, but as a measure treating all alike. Did they do this? They did not. We need, not so much measures to help the people, as a new birth of freedom.

Anna George deMille said the feeling of responsibility was always with her, but never more than when she faced an audience such as this. She had been fortunate in selecting her ancestors. Speaking of the birthplace of her father now acquired by the Henry George Foundation, she hoped it would be restored as it was in 1839. She trusted that the little house would be a shrine, a Mecca, for Single Taxers the world over.

She described the Henry George Hotel in San Francisco, and pictured her visit to the spot where "Progress and Poverty" was written, in sight of the ships and sky and sea. And she thought how, as he wrote and rewrote, making from the "dismal science" a book that is in so great a part a poem, Henry George must have yearned for the sea and ships he loved so well.

Joseph McGuinness recited the Calf Path by Sam Walter Foss in his inimitable style.

Mrs. Signe Bjorner, of Copenhagen, who had landed from Europe only a few hours before, spoke in high praise of Jakob Lange, and with an eye to some of the differences that had developed in Denmark, said that it seemed to her well that we should fight over non-essentials if we agreed on essentials.

President Evans then announced officially the purchase of the little house on 10th Street, Philadelphia, where Henry George was born.

The speech of Frank Stephens was as eloquent an address as was ever heard at any Single Tax gathering. The movement is vital and enduring that can inspire such an address, nor has the day of our orators departed so long as the Arden apostle is with us. Few present could have failed to be thrilled by such an appeal.

WEDNESDAY MORNING

At this session Mr. M. Van Veen acted as chairman, and it was fitting that a meeting presided over by our uncompromising radical should have been the occasion for the noble utterance of Rev. A. W. Littlefield, the appeal for fundamental presentation of our principles from James Bruce Lindsay and the earnest talk of George Edwards. Mr. Edwards said: "We have been talking fiscal matters; George wrote of the vision of a new world. We are talking mechanics; George spoke of the Kingdom of God on earth." Mr. Geiger commenting on Mr. Littlefield's address said, "You cannot approach this question by a cent per cent appeal."

WEDNESDAY LUNCHEON

At the luncheon on this day James F. Morton presided, and Hamlin Garland spoke of the early days of the movement. Poultny Bigelow, who was to have spoken in the morning on "Henry George and His Friends," was unable

to be present owing to the illness of his wife, but he sent his beautiful tribute to his old friend, and this was read by Joseph Dana Miller. It will find place in our next number.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

At this session, presided over by Amy Mali Hicks, speeches were made by Mrs. Christine Ross Barker, George H. Hallett, Jr., and James F. Morton, whose address was a plea for unification, thus fittingly closing a three days' convention characterized throughout by a spirit of earnestness and good feeling on the part of the delegates and a fine spirit of enthusiasm for future work.

Busses conveyed the delegates who remained to the tomb of the Prophet in Greenwood and here Hamlin Garland, Will Atkinson, Jakob Lange and Anna George de Mille made short addresses and William Ryan read part of the last chapter of "Progress and Poverty." Lawrence Henry, a veteran of the days of '86 and a member of the United Labor party at that time, had brought with him the banner carried by him in the George parade. This he had draped lovingly over the tomb and had taken his place beside the grave of the man he revered, and stood there, a lone sentinel, awaiting the arrival of the delegates. In a few simple and halting words, broken by emotion, he told of the early days of the United Labor Party and the leader he had followed so devotedly. It was an unconscious tribute to the man whose mastery of the human heart, whose ability to command the love of his fellows in all ranks of life, was as great as his commanding genius, his indomitable courage.

Address of Welcome by Hon. Edward Polak

FELLOW SINGLE TAXERS: It is a great privilege to welcome you to this city on this very inspiring occasion.

This is more than a perfunctory welcome, as the great purpose for which we have met is not of the ordinary kind. This is the most important gathering, in some respects, that has ever met in this city, for if the principles for which we are convened were enacted into statute law the blighting conditions which cause poverty, disease and premature death would be abolished.

Abraham Lincoln stood for the abolition of chattel slavery, but if the principles which Henry George proposed were carried out industrial slavery for all the race would be abolished. It is patriotic in the true sense for men and women to leave their homes and occupations, paying their own expenses and without any hope of reward save the satisfaction it gives to do what is right and just, to attend this convention. It shows the unselfish spirit which should be an example and inspiration for others to emulate. What greater sacrifice can one make than to give his life for the betterment of mankind? It is this