

Good Work, Mr. Jorgensen

THE *Bulletin*, organ of the Merchants and Manufacturers' Federal Tax League, of which Emil O. Jorgensen is editor, has done a work of real service in its exposé of Prof. Richard T. Ely. It says:

"Last month, under the caption "Prostituting a Great State University," we published a brief editorial questioning the good faith of the "Institute for Research in Land Economics and Public Utilities,"—an organization of professors (and others) located in the University of Wisconsin and the Director of which is Dr. Richard T. Ely of the Department of Economics.

The substance of our editorial was that while this so-called "Institute for Research" has its domicile inside of the University, with a staff made up largely of professors from the University, "it is, from all that we are able to find out, not financed by the University, but is supported entirely by private funds from the outside—funds contributed in the large by certain corporations and economic groups seeking to have privilege and monopoly taxed *less* and industry and consumption taxed *more*." We ended our editorial by urging all business men, farmers and other producers, if they value their liberties, to keep an eye on this "Institute."

The *Bulletin* wants to know where Prof. Ely gets the money for the work of this pretended "institute" which located in the University is being financed with outside contributions. And it charges:

(1) That the Institute is not a bona fide "research" organization as it claims and pretends to be.

(2) That the underlying purpose of the Institute is not the "impartial investigation" of principles and facts that will lead to knowledge, but subtle propaganda *against* certain far-reaching policies and in *behalf* of certain other policies—a purpose that Professor Ely emphatically denies.

The *Bulletin* further says:

"Now, there are many men and women of high and respected authority—and their numbers are steadily increasing, as an examination of the recently published Report of the Manufacturers and Merchants Federal Tax League will show—who hold that the only logical and true solution of both the land and tax problems is to abolish gradually all taxes on human industry and raise the public revenue from land values only. But the first three books published by this "Institute for Research"—three books called "The Outlines of Land Economics" and written by Dr. Ely himself for the guidance of the Institute in its future work—three books upon which the forty-seven or more books still to be issued by the Institute will be based—*these three books are filled from first to last with every conceivable "argument" AGAINST the taxation of land values in any shape, form or manner!*"

Truly this is what the *Bulletin* accurately terms "the prostitution of a great University." It is rumored that Prof. Ely has personally enriched himself by land speculation, and that this is responsible for the modification of the views he once held. It is time that some one made an investigation of Prof. Ely's activities in connection with this so-called "Institute". Cannot the directors of

the University be induced to take this matter up and help remove the stigma which must attach to this great institution of learning of which the people of Wisconsin have had reason to be justly proud?

Wherein Mr. Post is Mistaken

IN a recent number of *Land and Liberty*, of London, England, Mr. Louis F. Post has a thoughtful letter on the land question in which he points out what he thinks is the different attitude with which the British and American voter regard that question. Mr. Post thinks the land question is closer to the common thought in Great Britain while with us it is too closely identified with other property to be as carefully distinguished. The inference is that in this country we should approach our goal and direct our propaganda to the tax question rather than to the land question. This would be to emasculate the great message of industrial emancipation which Henry George gave to the world, and indeed the insistence laid on this side of our question, to the ignoring of its more important relations, is responsible for the snail-like progress of our movement.

Superficially it may seem that the London worker is better able to gather from the facts of his economic experience a clearer view of the land question than is common with us. This is perhaps true of the rural worker of England. But the complaint is general from the other side of the water that the city worker has no better knowledge of the land question than has the worker in American cities.

Mr. Post says in conclusion:

"Yet the approach may differ with time, place and circumstances. In any time or place or circumstances in which the land question monopolizes public attention, the best practical policy is from landowning principle to taxation method; where and when tax questions monopolize public attention, the best practical policy is from taxation principle to landowning method. George exemplified all this with marked emphasis when he urged us of this country to fall in with the tariff-tax movement of 1888."

Now this contains more than one fallacy. As a guide to political action the injunction which has been too faithfully followed has brought disaster to the movement. We have heard but little save the taxation side of our movement for many years. If we had considered it only as a method of attaining our ends rather than as an end in itself, no harm would have been done. Had we kept in view the securing of equal rights to land through the taking of the economic rent of land much of the misunderstanding which has stood in the way of popular acceptance of our doctrine might have been avoided. The taxing machinery that lies ready made to hand for this purpose is a mere accident. If there were no taxes at all there would still be abundant reasons for taking the economic rent of land. It is not even necessary to get rid of taxes to take this eco-

conomic rent. Because we have called ourselves "Single Taxers" we have split *one* question into a thousand questions, each of which we find it necessary to justify in argument. The assumption that it is necessary to get rid of existing taxes before taking this economic rent—in accordance with our stated programme, "Abolish all taxes save that on land values"—has obscured the more important question that the rent of land belongs to the people and that it is the first duty of government to collect it. Add to this, "in lieu of all taxation," if you like, but be careful to follow the French maxim, "First things first," or, better still, the most important thing first.

Transferred to the political field this teaching which Mr. Post defends by inference, has brought almost catastrophic results. It led Henry George into the mistake of supporting Cleveland in 1888, a mistake that could have been rectified when it was seen that it was a grave error of policy. Animated by that example we drifted into a variety of movements, socialistic, semi-socialistic, progressive, but never representative even by accident of the thing we believed in. There was a bewildering procession of political leaders whom we were urged to "get behind." Always we were to get behind—somebody or something—never in front of anything. Cleveland, Bryan, Hearst and many others, now among the discards. And today, learning nothing, remembering nothing, numbers of Single Taxers are trooping behind La Follette.

Better to stand alone and refuse to vote, better still to register one's convictions in a hopeless contest, going down to defeat if need be to the very end, than to support things we do not want, measures we do not approve, policies we oppose and candidates hopelessly ignorant or covertly hostile to the truths we believe in.

Such has been our leadership! Lacking courage, talking at election time everything but the great truth, voting against the thing we hold as the salvation of mankind, we have been the Hessian soldiery of every political mountebank who has appeared. But we made no bargains. We did not demand that this motley collection of political tatterdemalions give us anything for our support of their ambitions, not even a few crumbs from the banquet board. We had a truth which had it been persistently presented, would have surely found a popular response. But every political pretender knew that we could be depended upon when the time came and the trumpet sounded to sink this truth until the campaign was over. Insistence upon it might prove hurtful to the interests of the leaders, so we were as silent as the grave.

Oh, the insensate futility of it! And some of us are repeating it today. Every vote cast for La Follette is a confirmation and continuance of the policy that has left the movement without leaders that any man respects, while the great truth that means everything for mankind lies a political football, a derided thing, a jest in the mouths of the politicians to whom we have sold ourselves. For

well they know how to estimate the value of a movement whose high professions are voluble nine months in the year, utterly unheard of during the other three, and finally strangled to death on election day!

The Fairhope Courier on Party Action

E. B. GASTON, editor of the *Fairhope Courier*, in a recent issue of that admirable paper, says, replying to Messrs Seibert, of Minnesota, and Vyne, of Arizona, both convinced Single Tax Party men:

"The idea of Single Taxers 'standing up and being counted' for some Single Tax candidate whom everybody knows stands not a ghost of a show of being elected, seems heroic, but when it results simply in emphasizing how few Single Taxers there are; in leaving the reactionaries unopposed to control the dominant parties and in withholding all aid and encouragement from much larger groups than ours, which while they may not all see the full truth as we see it, are honestly concerned with reforms embodying real principles in which we also believe, there is, in our opinion, nothing to be said for it from the standpoint of virtue or practicality.

"Fairhope Single Taxers were zealous enough and heroic enough, if you please, to 'go the limit' of what they knew they could individually accomplish, but they are not strong on withdrawing from contact with their fellow citizens and standing apart in an effort which they know stands no chance of success."

As we understand the arguments of the advocates of party action, they urge voting for what they believe in not because it is "heroic," but because it squares with common sense and common honesty.

Mr. Gaston thinks it unfortunate that Single Taxers who affiliate with the Commonwealth Land Party should thus withdraw from the larger groups "who may not see the truth as we see it but are honestly concerned with reforms embodying real principles."

There are several answers to this. Perhaps it may be instructive to suggest an analogy. When the Fairhoppers heroically withdrew from the "larger groups" and settled on the shores of Mobile Bay to attempt a working demonstration of the Single Tax principle, they did just what Mr. Gaston thinks it unwise for the Single Taxers to do in other fields of activity. In the religious world Christian Scientists, Swedenborgians, and others withdrew from the "larger groups" and in the beginning organized their smaller groups as the best way to advance the cause of Christ. They were not deterred by the thought that they were no longer part of the "larger group."

But there is another and more conclusive answer to Mr. Gaston's argument. Note the words: "Are honestly concerned with reforms embodying real principles." As applied to the La Follette party this is simply not true.