

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

THE election having passed we now have time for reflection. We might say it was "bought and paid for." The popular majority of votes cast for Mr. Roosevelt is about equal to the number on relief—ten million. Judiciously distributed throughout the states that number, in so far as the records go, would decide any presidential election.

BUT that is perhaps an over-simplification. Not all those on relief voted for Mr. Roosevelt, and numbers were lost to him of the more thoughtful citizens who were opposed to his programme. Let us recognize the other side of the picture. The masses of the disinherited, kicked from pillar to post, hailed the new evangel, preached in persuasive language, as their salvation. The remedies were futile but they could not be expected to know that. Their economic knowledge is no greater than that of their leader. A few Single Taxers voted for him with doubtful hesitancy, and may have quoted Flaubert to themselves, "What after all if the absurd should be true."

IT is, however, the future that should interest us. As the weakness of the Republican party consists in its adherence to old-time policies, so its strength in the future must be in its acceptance of a free competitive capitalism. It cannot continue to talk of "free enterprise" without abandoning its devotion to a high tariff, the effect of which is to strangle enterprise.

HAPPILY they are not without precedents of their own to guide them in future tariff policies. There are Blaine's reciprocity treaties, the extraordinary speech made by McKinley on the very eve of his assassination; the statement of Senator Sherman, a stalwart Republican, that, "Every obstruction to a free exchange of commodities is born of the same narrow and despotic spirit which planted castles upon the Rhine to plunder peaceful commerce. Every obstruction to commerce is a tax on consumption. Every facility to a free exchange cheapens commodities, increases trade and protection, and promotes civilization." And it was James G. Blaine who said: "Undoubtedly the inequalities in the wages of English and American operatives are more than equalized

by the greater efficiency of the latter and their longer hours of labor." Theodore Roosevelt was a free trader and James A. Garfield was a member of the Free Trade Cobden Club. So what remains of the Republican party is not without distinguished precedents.

OF course, should the Republican party follow the example of these eminent leaders, that in itself would not be enough. If the "free enterprise" talked about is to be a reality, taxes on all labor products must be transferred to economic rent and one hundred per cent of it collected for public purposes. Henry George has shown us that the benefits of free trade would ultimately be absorbed in increased land values. This statement amounts almost to a demonstration, since land values reflect every advance in social improvement.

AND if the Republican party wants to take a stand on these principles it may again harken back to another of its great leaders who saw the land question in a big way. It will surprise many of them to know that Lincoln said: "The land, the earth God gave to man for his home, sustenance and support should never be the possession of any man, corporation, society or unfriendly government, any more than the air or water, if as much." And when offered an opportunity to get possession of a piece of land which he was assured would grow in value, he said, "I do not believe in it." He sensed the evils of land speculation and was opposed to it. He did not see the remedy which was later given to the world by Henry George, but he said: "A reform like this will be worked out in the future." And with keen insight he predicted what has actually happened: "The idle talk of idle men that is so common now, will find its way against it, and with whatever force it may possess, and as strongly promoted and carried on as it can be by land monopolists, grasping landlords and the titled and senseless enemies of mankind everywhere." These are words as strong as ever Henry George used and they are singularly prophetic. May we not hope that the Republican party will take up the challenge that Lincoln laid down? Will it learn to sit at the feet of its older and better teachers?

IN view of the situation today, and what may happen in the next four years, there is great need of a national Single Tax Association. This was the feeling at the late

Henry George Congress. We believe that the time was never more promising. The School is filling splendidly its function and the Schalkenbach Foundation is doing a work that is imperatively needed. Both of these organizations are estopped from any kind of political activity. And both can function better without it.

IN this connection a communication addressed to the Henry George Congress, but not read, by C. H. Kendal, of Summit, N. J., is important. He wrote as follows: "I assume that Single Taxers see as I do, a definite trend to some form of collectivism and that this trend must run its course and in the end go down in failure. This being so it seems to me that it behooves us to take our stand for individualism and not be confused in the public mind with that which is doomed to failure. Another matter: We have noted in New York that visitors from abroad and from distant parts of our own country interested in the land question have difficulty in locating the Single Tax or Henry George movement. Without interfering with any of the present Henry George activities I hope we may, at an early date, have a Henry George Society of America, with at least its name in the telephone directory in each and every large city. I advocate this only as inexpensive nucleus, a clearing house for Single Tax information and activities. I am not the only one suggesting this form of organization, and if there is any favorable action to be taken beware the expensive or extensive. Let us start with simplicity and, assuming a real need for it, it will grow."

THERE are 48 experimental stations in the Union. In every one of these something can be done. But a national association for help and encouragement is needed. As soon as a vulnerable place in the armor is discovered in any one of these experimental stations the national association may direct its influence toward effective action.

WHAT is needed is publicity. A national organization will give it. It will stimulate and excite action. It will aid to correct misunderstanding and misrepresentation. It will be constantly at work through a paid secretary. His duty will be to gather statistics, of which there is so much need. And to bind together the forces now scattered, a branch office in every city with one individual who will consent to act, and one telephone call, without cost to Single Taxers. This skeleton organization will in many cities expand into something more, but always as a branch of the National organization with headquarters in New York, Chicago or Washington. The Henry George Fellowship will, we believe, collaborate in this proposal.

The Movement in Holland

AT the late International Conference in London, Mr. Kolthek appealed for financial support of Georgeists throughout the world for the campaign beginning in Holland in 1937. The disciples of Henry George in that country believe conditions are suited for carrying on a political campaign, which they have done since 1890 to the present day.

In 1931 the existing party known as "Justice and Liberty" was founded under the direction of Mr. Kolthek. He was a member of the Dutch Parliament from 1918 to 1922. He became an adherent of the Henry George philosophy in 1927 and in 1929 made a translation of "Protection or Free Trade," and is now engaged in a translation of "Progress and Poverty." He edits a weekly paper in Groningen which is now in its sixth year.

In 1931 the Georgeists of Groningen participated in a municipal campaign and obtained over 900 votes which entitled them to one seat in the municipal council, which was taken over by Mr. Kolthek. In 1933 the party also nominated candidates for Parliament. With no money to carry on a campaign the nominee received nearly 5,000 votes.

In 1935 the municipality of Groningen had another election. This time the party received 6,608 votes and had five seats assigned it.

At the beginning of 1937 the Dutch Parliament will again be elected, but the Henry George party, the party of Justice and Liberty, is badly in need of funds. Each party participating in the election must deposit the sum of 750 pounds. This sum is refunded if the party obtains 75 per cent of the number of votes necessary to secure one seat. Holland has Proportional Representation.

The Dutch people are tenacious of the ideals of liberty to which they cling. This is proved by the history of this sturdy little country. It is gratifying to know that the movement is making such progress in Holland and is in the hands of competent leaders.

IT seems to me impossible to consider the necessarily universal character of the protective theory without feeling it to be repugnant to moral perceptions and inconsistent with the simplicity and harmony which we everywhere discover in natural law.

PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE?

THE protective theory implies the opposition of national interests; that the gain of one people is the loss of others; that each must seek its own good by constant efforts to get advantage over others and to prevent others from getting advantage over it.

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