

for which he formerly paid \$25 a month. "But, because city lots are taxed too low the owners can hold out for a long time for the highest prices," he says, "this not only prevents the building of enough houses, but raises the cost of building them, and this higher cost of houses, and the scarcity of them, very naturally raises the rents, which this workman has to pay, to \$40 a month, which takes 15 per cent. more out of the workman's wages in addition to the 30 per cent. already taken out for food and clothing taxes, which makes \$45 a month which the workman cannot use to buy products nor anything else.

"When we multiply this one case with the millions of workmen throughout our nation with about half of their wages filched away from them in misplaced tax burdens, and with every month in the year, then we can first begin to realize the viciousness of our present oppressive tax system and the stupendous burden upon them and ourselves and the crime against us all.

"If taxes were placed upon all land and lots and locations suitable for big buildings as well as on all idle farm lands, according to their true selling value, then there would be enough income to run our whole government and there would be no need for the several taxes on our farm improvements, and chattel taxes, income and food taxes, and license fees for every move we make. Then our dollars would buy 30 per cent. more things for our homes and families; and the millions of city workmen could buy 45 per cent. more of our products and other needful things for their insufficiently fed and clothed children, and they could live in better homes at the old time rate of rents. Our surplus farm products would then find a ready market right here at home among our own people, right here in our own country; and the manufacturers of machinery for farming purposes could sell their whole output to us American farmers instead of shipping their machinery out of our reach into far away foreign countries."

In addressing Farm Center meetings relative to our unsound and unjust system of taxation Mr. Briggs relates his own experience of transforming his farm from its wild sage brush and uneven condition, to its present leveled up, checked and fully irrigated arrangement suitable for grape and cotton culture.

"The outlay for the transformation, together with the cost of two dwellings, barns and irrigation pumps cost \$100 per acre besides the purchase price of the land," he says. Then the assessor came around and raised the taxes on this quarter section from its former ridiculously low figure to an enormous sum that was equivalent to an actual penalty for changing this barren waste of land into a farming enterprise capable of producing big crops for the benefit of mankind. This is no fault of the assessor. It is a defect in our system of taxation which places blocks under the wheels of progress, which obstructs every good move we make, and under which we all suffer alike and from which none of us can escape until the system is changed and corrected.

"The real causes of our handicaps and shortcomings in

the business of farming have their actual beginnings in this unsound tax plan, and its bad influence operates in such a roundabout way and so underhanded and silently, that we don't notice it until its damaging results are fully on our hands. And even then, hardly anyone realizes that the real cause of most of our hard struggles and losses begins away back in this unrighteous tax plan.

"This imposition upon us improvers is bad enough in itself; but when I and others, and the nearby Herbert Hoover 2,500 acre enterprise, demonstrate what this unproven land is capable of producing, then the holders of the millions of acres of surrounding land immediately raise their prices per acre and thus exact a forestaller's unearned ransom. This has the blighting effect of keeping the rising generation from their natural rights to a place on earth, causes tens of thousands of newcomers to again leave our fair State and keeps it from its proper and well deserved development."

When Mr. Briggs makes these points, I invariably noticed persons brightening up, seeming to have had the same experiences in their own localities. The routine business of the Farm Center meeting precludes going into the academic phases of a correct plan of taxation, but always at the close of the addresses, someone is bound to have sensed Single Tax sentiment and will ask if he would advise a change to that system to escape from our deplorable predicament; whereupon, Mr. Briggs replies by asking the questioner, "Well, considering the fact that on every dollar's worth of merchandise you buy, you pay the taxes on nine different businesses—wouldn't you on the whole prefer a single tax?" And this sets the questioner to thinking, and seems to amuse the others, and always creates a noticeably favorable impression on the audience.

JOHN H. MEYER.

## A Few Words With Samuel Gompers

DEAR MR. GOMPERS:

My attention has been called to an article in the January number of the *American Federationist*. Its title is "Abolish Unemployment," and its sub-title is very positive: "It Can and Must Be Done—Labor's Remedy."

Years ago Mr. Henry George said in a public address: "My friend, Sam Gompers, has proposed 24 solutions for our labor troubles, and not one of them the right one."

Speaking in San Francisco, December 1st, 1913, 16 years after Henry George's death, you spoke as follows: "I believe in the Single Tax. I count it a great privilege to have been a friend of Henry George, and to have been one of those who helped to make him understood in New York and elsewhere."

I beg to call your attention to this very emphatic statement. I will not hint that in the work of "making Henry George understood" you have not been as unremitting as we might have desired. I refrain from indicating your

shortcomings in this respect. Certainly your efforts to make him understood have received scant publicity. It may have been that your opportunities have been exercised privately, and thus have not received the newspaper notoriety that your other manifold activities have.

In this article in the *Federationist*, you suggest means of providing employment for the unemployed. You might have begun your article by showing what it is that lies at the basis of the problem of unemployment—why it is that men willing and able to work are unable to find it. Your answer to this question is not given; the question itself is not even propounded. Your article gives no assurance that you have advanced much beyond Mr. Taft, who when questioned as to what could be done to remedy industrial conditions, replied, "God knows—I don't." He answered honestly enough, for Mr. Taft is honest.

But you are the leader of the forces of labor in this country. It is your business to know. You cannot take refuge, as Mr. Taft did, in the omniscience of the divine.

Will you pardon me for saying that you are paid to know—that if you do not know it is not your misfortune alone—it is Labor's misfortune. And if you do not know (again you will pardon me) you should resign your position as leader, and give way to those who *do* know—for there *are* those who know, who do not merely *say* that they have tried to make Henry George "understood," but who are doing it.

You are privileged to speak as the representative of labor in a very special sense. Surely something of the dignity of labor should appeal to your understanding; some comprehension of its power should inform your consideration of the problem you are discussing.

Yet everywhere in this article you speak of labor as something to be "provided for;" employers are urged to "provide" increased employment by labor shifts; government is to "provide" work by speeding up public construction in times of depression. You seem to consider labor as helpless, and only to be aided by capital; expedients are to be adopted by employers, and enterprises of government construction are to be entered upon everywhere. Yet labor is the producer of all wealth; it builds your cities and towns; your railroads and skyscrapers; it feeds and clothes us. Yet you talk of it as something to be "coddled" by capital and government.

You talk also as a certain order of college professors do who seek, like the cuttlefish, to cloud the waters. You speak of "forms" of unemployment—as if being out of a job were capable of that kind of classification. The phrase is altogether dubious. You speak of the "unemployment" that prevails in "hard times," as if hard times were not caused by unemployment. For as men are thrown out of employment what economists call the "effective demand" is reduced, and times become "hard" in consequence. "Hard times" and "unemployment" are at least correlative terms, different words for the same social phenomenon; and we are no nearer the solution of the problem by these almost meaningless verbal refinements.

The sentence of Secretary Hoover, which you quote, is almost as bad as anything you have to say yourself. I want to rescue this sentence of this much over-rated gentleman that we may take the Secretary's intellectual measure. Mr. Hoover says: "The administration has felt that a large degree of solution (for unemployment) could be expected through the mobilization of the fine cooperative action of our manufacturers and employers, of our public bodies and our local authorities." Could anything beat this for an excursion into the realm of the "intense inane?" This is a fit companion piece for President Harding's statement of a million and a half "normally unemployed." Mr. Harding is very fond of the words, normal, normally, normalcy. Maybe in this case he means "usually," for why in a country such as ours should any one be unemployed "normally" who is able and willing to work? Yet this declaration, you, Mr. Gompers, accept, apparently without reservation.

Now here is your conclusion, after having urged as the only remedies for unemployment those I have indicated—the chief, almost the sole one being *the speeding up of public works*. In what follows you use many words, but they are wholly inconclusive. Your words are big—but not with meaning. It seems incredible that you should have forgotten that you have proposed nothing beyond what I have indicated. There is nothing new in what you say—worse, there is nothing true. "Seasonal unemployment" and "cyclical unemployment" are just words. You should be ashamed to use them. It is criminal trifling. Either that, or when you said, "I believe in the Single Tax," you did not know what you were talking about. Here follows your summing up—but a summing up only in this sense—from inconclusion to inconclusion.

#### THE PROBLEM CAN AND MUST BE SOLVED

The problem of unemployment can be solved. Seasonal unemployment can be almost eliminated. Cyclical unemployment is a social crime of the highest order and no society which permits it to continue can expect to survive.

As long as men and women, eager to work, in a country filled with untold riches of materials and land, are denied the opportunity to work and to maintain themselves properly, our society is bankrupt in its most important essential.

The question is no longer open to debate. The problem of unemployment **must be solved**. There is no alternative.

Labor lays down its proposals. It supports every constructive move, no matter where or by whom initiated. It brings forward in addition to those moves a program of proposals which will clear away the social waste and wreckage caused by unemployment and put the nation on the road to full and final remedy.

These proposals are before America. Labor demands that the problem be attacked with full vigor and determination, with fearlessness and an eye to solution with justice.

Working people must work to live. To deny the opportunity to work is to enforce death.

The problem can be solved. It must be solved. The time for action and solution is, not tomorrow, but NOW!

Now, Mr. Gompers, listen! How many acres of bituminous and anthracite coal lie untouched; how many acres

of iron, and copper and lead and phosphate; how much agricultural land; how many city lots? Never mind the figures. There is enough of all these within easy reach untouched by the hand of man, enough to provide employment for ten times the present population. We are so rich in unused natural resources that it staggers the imagination to conceive of them.

Here lie the resources for the hand of Labor. They are held out of use. To bring them together—these idle lands and idle hands—is to solve permanently the problem of unemployment—the “normal,” the “cyclical” and the “seasonal”—whatever those mean. It can be accomplished by the taxing power—by the Single Tax, in which, Mr. Gompers, you have declared your belief.

Now a word of caution. The forces of the American Federation of Labor are held together by the power of a single personality—yourself. The socialistic, communist forces are held in abeyance by your superb generalship; your patriotic stand in the war, has further increased your power. Against the forces of which I have spoken you have been the one conservative, restraining influence.

But your death, or defeat at the hands of the organization, will mean the lowering of the dykes and the coming inundation. The conservative props that support the Federation will be thrown to the control of the radical forces in the ranks of labor—some of whom will stop at nothing. Your death or deposition will be the signal of revolt against all conservatism in the Federation—the rational and irrational alike.

Then you are getting old. Only a few more years remain to you, in the very nature of things. Why not die raising the standard of human rights and justice in opposition to that mad radicalism which is certain to follow the first visible signs of your declining power?

Your position in the labor movement is unique. Powerfully, Sovereign, Mitchell, wielded no such power as yours. It is doubtful if the word of any man anywhere is quite so potent. Why not say the word that will make for the peaceful revolution, for Labor's emancipation (and that of capital as well) from the crushing imposts of monopoly, from the system that shuts out both Labor and Capital from the natural resources of this continent?

You will make enemies—very powerful ones. But you will make a friend of Truth, who is more powerful than legions of foes, than all the snarling, vicious journalists who will then bark at your heels. And you will have broken the silence maintained since 1913, when you said, “I am a Single Taxer,” and you will have proclaimed your loyalty to the memory of that friendship with Henry George which you announced with a sentiment of pride.

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

“A TAX on rents falls wholly on the landlord. There are no means by which he can shift the burden upon any one else.”—JOHN STUART MILL, “Principles of Political Economy,” Book V, Chap. III, Sec. 2.

## A Passage From a Forgotten Author

SUCH is the outline of the British aristocracy, and if we come to examine the anomalous influence over an active and practical kingdom, we shall find these resolved into two—their social monopoly and their monopoly of land. As a country, particularly a small country like England, grows richer and more densely peopled, the high circles of society become less accessible.

Riches seek recognition; cramped people want land. And going still one degree further in our inquiry, the land monopoly is the parent of social monopoly. A beggared and landless aristocracy has no chance for perpetuation, as the history of the Venetian and French nobility proves. The British nobles, seizing all the land, first from the Saxons, then from the Catholic Church, adopted the laws of primogeniture and entail by which their great estates were transmitted unbroken. Perhaps this is not the least of the causes which have driven millions of British subjects to America and Polynesia—a longing to own land monopolized by the few at home. The land is the best riches. It is most grudgingly held in England. The millions pay rent, the hundreds receive it. The better the skill and the enterprise of the millions, the dearer grows the rent of land under their feet. The aristocracy thus endowed is not the shadow of an ancient lineage merely. It is a powerful circle which, despite the democratic tendencies of the age, keeps its ranks unbroken and commands homage. Yet, despite its social graces, and the appeal it makes to our love of pomp and luxury, its virtues touch our imagination alone; for by the light of this century it is baneful and unjust as the worst relic of barbarism which has perished. The first step to take in its overthrow is to do justice. Remove the burdens of extravagant government from the poor and the landless, and lay them upon the ground. Thus taxed, acre by acre, the vast estates and parks will become expensive luxuries, and must, though reluctantly, be broken up. With land available, the commons will feel a new independence and industry and patience will rear a rival court; wealth, virtue and intellect will compose a new aristocracy. GEORGE ALFRED TOWNSEND, 1872.\*

\*This extract is from “The New World—Compared with the Old,” by George Alfred Townsend, who wrote under the pen name of “Gath.” He was correspondent for the *Philadelphia Ledger*. His description of a masquerade ball of the New York's Four Hundred, in which he said that “Vanderbilt appeared in a perfect disguise—that of a gentleman,” is a sample of his vitriolic style. Vanderbilt had assumed the character of one of “The Two Gentlemen of Verona.”—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

“WHAT Will the Irish Do With Ireland?” some one asks. We don't know, but probably a few will continue to charge the many for the privilege of staying in Ireland.—H. M. H.

LAND is the only thing whose use is stimulated by taxing it.—H. M. H., in *Cleveland Citizen*.