

ing," as they call it—and he cries: "We are better off with private ownership and higher charges, and our people are prosperous." And then he advises that all we need is more laws to prevent "watering," so as to give better values to the issues of stocks and bonds in which the "great estates" are investing their surplus.

Objectors to public ownership warn the people against the politicians, and especially of the dangers of centralization of power, and these they predict will combine to ruin the country.

Political leaders are not necessarily evil. The present vicious type of city boss was unknown forty years ago.

The marvellous growth of public service corporations, and the development of the modern street with its elaborate containments opened the door for legislative abuse of power in the granting of franchises, and the political machine and its boss are the illegitimate offspring of a surrender of public business and property to private control and exploitation. Private ownership of public utilities created the boss and public ownership will destroy his evil influence.

The argument that the enlargement of public business will be dangerous to our liberties overlooks the incongruity of private ownership of public business.

No possible harm can result from government assuming its normal functions. Centralization of power is only dangerous when personal liberty is thereby curtailed, but the opposite is true when personal liberty is enlarged. And it must be remembered that the functions of government are none the less actual and potential when exercised by private corporations; and centralization of power with all its worst effects is revealed to-day in the disclosures of rebates and other forms of direct invasion of the rights of the people by the powers of the general government granted to and exercised by the railroad corporations. Abuse of power is always possible under government ownership and operation, but it can be checked and corrected, while a greater abuse is inevitable under private ownership, and the attempted regulations by Congress and the states of private control of governmental functions is not only theoretically absurd, but these abortive efforts of legislatures and courts have revealed an unmistakable tendency toward the private control of all the powers of government—the very monstrosity of centralization!

The consummation of free government will only be achieved when government shall assume the exclusive performance of all strictly public business and taxes shall be drawn solely from the value of the land comprising the jurisdiction. All men can then become land owners, and the profit of association will be enjoyed by every man and in exact proportion to the measure of each individual's participation in the making of it.

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## PHILOSOPHICAL ANARCHISM AND THE SINGLE TAX.

(*For the Review.*)

By JAMES F. MORTON, Jr.\*

The common notion of the anarchist, sedulously fostered by gross misrepresentation in press and pulpit and on the political rostrum, is that of a deep

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\* The author of the foregoing article is an old friend of the editor of the *Review*. He is, as he tells us, a recent convert to the Single Tax, and we are glad to welcome this earnest minded thinker to our ranks. Certainly none of us will presume to deny that Mr. Morton's conception of the ultimate form of society may not be the true one—these are matters beyond

dyed plotter against social existence or a madman running amuck in a wild propaganda of blind destruction. Few words of disproof are necessary to the intelligent Single Taxer. He has himself sufficiently tasted of venomous misrepresentation to be distrustful of the verdict rendered on *ex parte* testimony by conservatism against all who dare to challenge its pet beliefs. There are several thousand philosophical anarchists in this country, men and women of refinement and intelligence and earnestly devoted to the principle of liberty. They look forward to an ideal society, in which self-government will be law enough to safeguard the rights of all. I venture to say that their argument, once clearly understood, is logically irresistible. It is incapable of theoretical refutation. There can be no higher social state conceivable than one wherein free individuals co-ordinate their private aims with the general welfare through a spontaneous realization of the truth that so alone is a full and joyous self-expression to be attained.

And yet, along with an unavoidable recognition of the inspiring beauty of the ideal, there forces itself upon nearly every mind the unwelcome conviction that so idyllic a state, if ever to be found feasible, is incalculably distant from us in the future, and is only possible after large modifications have taken place in the human nature of to-day. Evolution moves surely, but with slow footsteps. After the many thousands of years which separate us from our simian ancestry we still retain in our anatomy those rudimentary organs which annihilate all intelligent opposition to the fundamental conclusions of modern biology. With equal slowness do the minds of men become gradually modified as the ages pass. While the current argument of conservatism, "You can't change human nature," is demonstrably false, it is equally untrue and scientifically absurd to declare that human nature can be suddenly so changed as to adapt itself to an ideally perfect environment. There is nothing more unscientific than "scientific" Socialism. That we are on the eve of great social changes is apparent from a thousand signs; but that we can with positive certainty announce the nature and extent of such changes is sheer presumption to declare. Tendencies may be clearly perceived, but undercurrents of modifying influences baffle all our calculations.

Hence it is that the philosophical Anarchist, having a magnificent vision of the far-off end, finds still confronting him the problems of the means by which the first steps toward human brotherhood and social justice may be taken to-day. What is the bridge over which the race must pass to the Promised Land?

Socialism is at first presented and is hailed by many sincerely ardent lovers of liberty as the next great step in progress. But alas! the apparent arc light soon betrays itself as a mere will-o'-the-wisp. It boots not to remind Single Taxers of the reasons so patent to all of them why the collectivist programme, despite the earnest good faith and devotedness of many of its advocates, bristles with economic fallacies and involves the death of individuality. There is not a ray of hope in this direction, but rather the direst menace to our dream of a larger freedom.

A few things can and ought to be done, and on these all radicals and reformers, so far as they think clearly and are broad in their aims, ought to unite with zeal. Inasmuch as a higher civilization demands a more fully evolved individuality it is no child's play, but a most essential aspect of our work, be we Socialists, Single Taxers or Anarchists, to make better thinkers out of our

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our ken. But the reasons that impel him to make common cause with Single Taxers ought to have equal weight with those of opposite faith. For, as Mr. Morton says: "To the sincere governmentalist it affords the only certain and efficacious means of purifying government from its present hideous excrescences." It is indeed the only path, and those who walk in it know that Liberty waits at the end—the Liberty that solves all.—Editor *Single Tax Review*.

selves and others. The curse of the world and the stumbling block of progress is that men and women let others do their thinking for them. The fight against superstitions and conventionalities is not a fad nor a minor issue, but of the most fundamental psychological importance, as laying the foundation for that clear-headedness and open-mindedness without which no progressive ideas can hope to make any headway. Race prejudice, as negating the primary object of all our efforts in its contemptuous denial of human brotherhood, is one of our deadliest enemies and deserves to be fought with all the intensity of which we are capable. The man who judges another by the mere color of his skin is unfit to be a leader in any progressive movement. But race prejudice is only one aspect of an unfortunate condition of mind. It is not so much any one particular superstition which needs to be rooted out as the habit of taking for granted the beliefs of our childhood or those current about us, without personal investigation of their truth and a full and unprejudiced examination of all sides, and this evil is incredibly widespread. What hope is there in the order of intelligence which fears to start a journey on Friday or to sit at a table with thirteen, to name only two of the multitude of idiotic signs accepted by a multitude who are far from illiterate? Is it to be supposed that men and women capable of unreasoning silliness of this description will be other than equally stupid in the matter of economic and social beliefs? They have lost or abrogated the power to do their own thinking, and until the whole bent of their minds is changed they are little better than so many cattle despite their technical skill or business capacity. To develop this lacking individuality it is well to reject forms and ceremonies, as far as possible, as mere crutches that tend to induce mental laziness and a blind adherence to the practices of the mob. Such a reform as cremation, from this standpoint, has more than hygiene to recommend it, and is particularly desirable as striking a blow against relic worship. Any belief which has not been well reasoned out by the person professing it is a superstition as far as he is concerned, even though, as a matter of fact, it may be true and accepted by many others in the light of a full demonstration.

The fight for free speech is another enormously important phase of radical work, and none of us can do too much in this respect. Here is the foundation of all freedom, and the enemies of liberty know that the surest mode of destroying all progress is to apply the gag to unpopular ideas. Beware of subtle apologies for allowing the persecution of this or that unpopular class. The attack on one is only the prelude to the attack on all who dare to criticise existing conditions or to point out the need of reform. The anti-Anarchist laws are only the beginning of a general assault on all social reformers. The deportation of John Turner was one of the blackest pages in American history, and the callousness of the people to outrages of this description speaks eloquently of the extreme need of elementary education in the concepts of liberty.

Beyond these obvious lines of work, however, it is clear that other immediate steps are demanded. The work with the individual is of vital importance; but it represents only half the problem. Progress is accomplished through a constant series of reflex actions between the individual and his environment, each acting and reacting on the other. What programme shall we adopt to furnish the slowly improving individual with a social and economic environment which he is in his present state capable of adopting and which will stimulate his further advance to higher forms? Having rejected Socialism, we are compelled to look further. It is reasonably plain that no vast advantages are to be expected from local experiments in the line of co-operation, colonization, labor exchange or mutual banking. All of those are worth trying under right conditions, and some of them have proved reasonably successful within a

limited area. But in the very nature of the case they fail to meet the main issue. We must either try something else or rest on our oars and wait for evolution to destroy the race or to force it into the changes necessary for its survival; and human intelligence has not developed in us for the purpose of any such refusal to make use of it.

If the foregoing reasoning is at all sound it will be obvious why a large number of philosophical Anarchists, without ceasing to cherish their own large ideal, have felt it incumbent on them to join the Single Tax movement and to work faithfully for its success; and among these I am at last prepared to rank myself. They are not traitors in the camp who ally themselves with the Single Tax movement with the secret intent of diverting it from its legitimate course. They accept the logic of the situation as requiring the freedom of the land as an essential prelude to other forms of freedom. The Single Tax is practical at the present day. It takes off burdens from the backs least able to bear them. It is a form of transformation wholly in the direction of a wider liberty. To the sincere governmentalist it affords the only certain and efficacious means of purifying government from its present hideous excrescences. To the sincere Anarchist it offers a long step toward the removal of the worst restraints on liberty and the vantage ground from which to point out, as a then demonstrated fact, that increased freedom brings ever increased happiness and makes men better rather than worse. Even if many of the predictions of enthusiastic Single Taxers prove exaggerated it will at least be found that the Single Tax opens the door to the largest forward movement that the race is ready to take. It does not, like Socialism, entwine us in an elaborate system from which escape is well nigh impossible. Its extreme flexibility renders further social changes attainable with the very minimum of difficulty. This one fact, even if the Single Tax were itself of little real value, would render it a strategic point well worth striving for, since modern industrialism, while differing in all else from Socialism, bears especially hard upon its victims through the fearful complexity of relationships which renders unequivocal improvement difficult almost to the verge of impossibility. The Single Tax, alone of proposed changes, removes this terrible obstacle without substituting a like unwieldiness in its room. It is thoroughly simple in its workings, and of itself eliminates an enormous percentage of the intricacies of the present social structure.

The influence of the Single Tax movement for liberty is already visible in the course of its foremost advocates. Every fight for free speech in recent years has found the Single Taxers in the front ranks. The outrages of imperialism, the abuses of the Postoffice Department, the crimes of race prejudice, the petty tyrannies of the Immigration Bureau, the persecutions of Anarchists and sex reformers and all similar issues of vital concern to American liberty have been fearlessly met by Single Taxers whenever they arose. On these subjects Louis F. Post alone, in his magnificent *Public*, has said more, and said it better, than all the Socialist editors in the country combined—and he is only one. A bitter fight is on between two opposing tendencies. While there is little ground for expecting the triumph of the exact form of Socialism now being widely preached the future holds the distinct threat of a paternalism combining Socialistic bureaucracy with monopolistic robbery and defying all attempts to shake off its yoke by peaceful means. The only strong counter movement, based on a clear cut economic analysis and recognizing the fundamental rights of the individual in society, is that of the Single Tax. A union of libertarian forces seems imperatively demanded. Whatever our ultimate ideal the present need must be met. Wherefore, while remaining a philosophic Anarchist, still looking forward to a human brotherhood of free men and women, I freely and cheerfully accept the logic of the situation and offer a comrade's hand to those

who have preceded me in Single Tax work, and to those to come also. Henceforth their fight is mine.

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## A SINGLE TAX TOWN OF 1867.

Nathan Niles' Attempt to Found Such a City.—Why the Attempt Failed.

(For the Review.)

By JUDGE EDWARD OSGOOD BROWN.

In the memorial issue of *The Johnstown Democrat* on the recent anniversary of the birthday of Henry George there was an admirable history of the Single Tax movement. Therein it was acutely pointed out that the necessary political reform which must be the advance courier of the Single Tax is "Local Option" or "Home Rule" in taxation. Municipalities must be given the right to adopt the Single Tax without waiting for action by the state. All progress toward practical application that the principle has made anywhere in the world has been on that line, and so it must continue to be.

I have thought it might be interesting to the readers of THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW to know of an attempt to put the principle of the Single Tax into practical operation in a developing town of Illinois years before "Progress and Poverty" was written. The attempt was made by the chief law officer of the place. He naturally became afterward an admirer and disciple of Henry George.

The city of Belleville, on the Mississippi River, in St. Clair County, is one of the oldest and best known of the smaller municipalities of Illinois. In it have lived Sydney Breese and Lyman Trumbull, Judges of the Supreme Court of Illinois and Senators of the United States; Governors Koerner and Kinney, and Congressmen Morrison and Baker, all names to conjure with in our state.

In 1867 a charter was granted to it by the Legislature. The City Council was given the power therein to lay out the city into districts for the construction of a system of municipal improvements and to levy and collect a tax on the real estate within any district thus to be improved. This exemption of personal property was in itself somewhat noteworthy and indicated that the true theory of taxation was working itself out in the mind of Nathan Niles, the corporation counsel of the town, who drafted these provisions. It was not, however, unique, for such exemptions had been theretofore made in various places for local or peculiar reasons.

When, however, Mr. Niles came to draw an ordinance for passage by the City Council to carry into effect this power granted by the charter he showed more clearly the principle on which he was acting. He prepared and the City Council passed, some time between 1867 and 1870, an ordinance for improvements in the different districts, levying the authorized tax only on the real estate therein, and expressly exempting all improvements on said real estate from the burden. The value of the land was to be determined without reference to any improvements thereon, and on that land value alone the tax was to be levied.

This Single Tax proposition concerning the payment for levees and sewers and other municipal improvements by the people to whom all their benefit was to accrue, doubtless, by its justice, pleased the majority of the people of Belleville, but it did not please the large land owners.

Mr. Stead has said that in the United States some written "constitution"