

The Single Tax Movement

ADDRESS OF JAMES F. MORTON

THE principle underlying the Single Tax movement is capable of demonstration from many angles. No matter what the line of approach, the argument is clear, simple and irrefutable, and the conclusion is inevitably the same.

The economist establishes the principle by an analysis of Land, Labor and Capital, the three factors in the production of wealth, and determines the laws of distribution and the correct relation of all the elements involved. The proof that economic rent is a community product follows beyond the possibility of challenge; and the logical requirement of its collection by the community to pay the expenses of organized society follows instantly.

The fiscal argument quickly establishes on no less certain grounds the ease, speed, certainty, common sense and justice of collecting public revenue from land values, supporting itself by a thousand evidences.

The appeal to industry and labor is no less indisputable. That the Single Tax in the very nature of the case relieves industry and thrift of the artificial burdens which weigh them down under our present improper system of taxing business, improvements, private property and incomes, appears from even a brief examination; that the freeing of the land from monopoly and the destruction of speculative values must open the door of opportunity to both labor and capital and secure to each its just return, is readily made plain; that this great reform frees honorable production from the strain under which it struggles, and places the burden of community support on the back of privilege, where it properly belongs, admits of no effective denial. The whole army of monopolies and privileges, by which the few strong are enabled to oppress and exploit the many weak, is easily shown to derive its main substance from the basic evil of land monopoly, the overthrow of which must utterly destroy the most serious of the remaining monopolies, and furnish the means of readily disposing of the lesser ones which may briefly survive.

The ethical argument is no less overwhelming. The Single Tax rests on the bed rock of exact justice. It is the only system of raising public revenue which robs nobody and which deals righteously with both the individual and the collective group.

Equally vital is the call for the reclamation of the land from those who have wrested it from the great mass of mankind. The earth, by inherent right pertaining to all the sons of men, has been seized by force and fraud; and the disinherited millions suffer all manner of evils in consequence of the original robbery. The Single Tax is the method of redemption of the soil and the liberation of mankind from the curse inflicted, not by the Creator but by those disobedient to the plain laws of the universe.

The sociological argument points out the far reaching

effects of placing the economic and social pyramid on its base, where it will stand firmly against all winds, and elaborates the results of bringing about the right relations required by economic principles. It shows how many secondary effects and by-products are derived from adherence to the true principle or by departure from it.

There is also a philosophical argument, which goes deeply into the fundamental laws of the universe. It shows the entire social problem to be one of maintaining a correct balance between the individual and society. The Single Tax is the one means of attaining the equilibrium which is as positively demanded in human relations as is the balance of the centripetal and the centrifugal forces to preserve the planets in their orbits.

The scripture declares that "Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." The test of a truth is its responsiveness to different methods of approach. When all roads lead to one, and only one, conclusion, we may be assured that the principle is established by the cumulative evidence. It is preeminently so with the Single Tax. There is no possible or conceivable mode of addressing ourselves to the underlying problems of society from which a direct line of proof does not lead to the necessity of bringing to pass this one basic readjustment as the prerequisite to any satisfactory social arrangement. The appeal may be drawn from the viewpoint of idealism or from that of materialism; and it is equally irresistible. The voice of religion, with its impassioned call for the establishment of the kingdom of God and of righteousness on earth, and the coldly impersonal analysis of exact science arrive at the same end. The principle of the Single Tax blends the essential truths of Individualism with the nucleus of truth concealed under the glaring economic errors and fallacies of Socialism and Communism; and it offers the real human liberty toward which the Anarchist is blindly groping, without disturbing the beneficial features of the social order to which the conservatives cling.

It is a mighty cause which inspires us to labor. The future of the human race is bound up in it. The hope of humanity rests upon its triumph. The cry of the disinherited is rising louder and louder; and the victims of wrong and injustice are perishing all around us. This is no time for petty quibbling or for the waste of energy on heresy trials. Our movement has long been handicapped by disunion. We who so clearly understand the rights of the individual have been prone to exhibit the defects of our virtues. We have been so intense in our individuality that we have lost the benefit of concerted effort. Misunderstandings have been frequent among equally conscientious and earnest workers for the common cause. It is impossible that we should all think alike, or should prefer the same arguments or approve the same tactics. We may even dispute widely over the matter of nomenclature, from the use of the familiar term "Single Tax" to almost

every other expression used by us. These, however, are minor things. What is important is to strain every nerve to bring the day nearer when the earth shall be freed from the spoiler and restored to the people, and when organized society shall be firmly grounded on right and just economic relations. Every ally and auxiliary who strikes one blow at the hydra-headed evil which we combat should be welcome to us. If there are those who will come but one step of the way toward the great goal, let us rejoice in their willingness to chop away at least a few fibres from the root of the foul Upas tree. They are beginning a process which we shall know how to carry further. Those who see the truth "as through a glass darkly" are at least turning their eyes in the right direction; and a clearer vision may yet come to them, and will surely come to many whom they are the means of arousing from their complete blindness. It has well been said by another that our movement needs now, as never before, to be re-baptized in the spirit of the fine old utterance: "In things essential, unity; in things non-essential, liberty; in all things, charity."

The Henry George Foundation is rendering an invaluable service in bringing together in the common cause those who have long gazed askance at one another. We are learning that what we have in common is infinitely more than the things which separate us. We may well regard the Foundation as a clearing-house of Single Tax activities. It furnishes a central meeting-point for all who are touched with the spirit of service. We may form as we find best in separate groups for those methods of argument and propaganda which meet with the approval of some and not of all; and from the success or failure of particular efforts we shall continue to learn and to improve our methods. But at all times the sincere exertions of the loyal followers of the truths enunciated by Henry George will prove to converge more and more. We have no cause for discouragement. The field is already white with the harvest; and it is for the reapers to put forth their sickles with renewed vigor. All that is truly sacred is with us; and no man blest with the true vision can doubt that the future is ours, and that what we are now doing is preparing the way for the coming of the real kingdom of justice and righteousness on earth.

Pennsylvania Party Nominates

THE following motion was passed unanimously by the Pennsylvania State Committee of the Commonwealth Land Party:

"The Pennsylvania State Committee of the Commonwealth Land Party recommends that the National Committee of the Party hold National Convention in the early part of 1928, and pledges itself to place presidential electors on the ticket in Pennsylvania."

The Philadelphia County Convention of the Party nominated the following:

Mayor—Frederick E. Mayer.

Receiver of Taxes—Leo W. Marks.

Clerk of Quarter Sessions—Henry W. Hetzel.

Sheriff—Thomas Jefferson Davis.

District Attorney—William G. Wright.

County Commissioners—William R. Kline and Charles J. Schoales.

Magistrates—Frank Pfrommer, George A. Haug, Oliver Wingert, June Dix, Edward L. Haggerty, William A. Hagan, John A. Kass, Thomas P. Dolan, Dr. John Purdy, Frederick W. Rous and William C. Mickle.

The Committee has planned an intensive campaign, and it intends to hold at least six outdoor meetings each week until the eve of election.

Six speakers have already volunteered in Philadelphia, and John W. Dix, editor of *The Commonwealth*, and Julian P. Hickok, instructor in one of our higher educational institutions, both members from outside Philadelphia, have promised to devote two nights a week to public speaking during the campaign.

CHARLES J. SCHOALES, Secretary.

The Commonwealth Land Party Does a Good Work

THE National Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Land Party at one of its regular meetings resolved that a sum of money be expended to send "Progress and Poverty" in cloth to men and women occupying positions of responsibility as educators, legislators or public officials in Mexico, Russia, China and Italy.

Mexico was the first country selected, and copies of Henry George's great work forwarded to twenty eminent men of that country, accompanied by a letter explaining the reasons for sending it and asking for some expression of opinion. The result has been immensely gratifying. We append a few of the replies received.

Senor R. P. de Negri, Mexican Minister to Germany, writes from Berlin as follows:

"I have received your kind letter of June the 28th, as well as Mr. Henry George's book entitled "Progress and Poverty," for both of which I thank you very much. Although I had read Mr. George's book before, it has been a pleasure for me to go over it again, so comforting are its contents. And being, as I am, interested in social and political questions, anything that deals with the solutions of the problems which confront the world and our country is worth while studying, and again I thank you for your trouble in sending material which is of importance to me."

Senor Juan Urquidi, author and engineer, and Mexican minister at Columbia, writes:

"I consider that work as a most important contribution toward a rational and definite solution of our "land question" in Mexico, and I am glad to be given the opportunity to study carefully once more (for it is long since I first read that book) the principles of the Georgist philosophy."