

## CHAPTER VI

### *Education*

OUR FRIENDS AND wellwishers tell us that if we are to succeed we must above all things educate the people. But if we undertake this must we not be educated ourselves? As a matter of illustration, may we not inquire if, as now understood, having some acquaintance with *Progress and Poverty*, we communicate this to the rest of the community, will all men comprehend the theory we advocate and immediately accept it and practice its teachings? The vast majority of people in what we call the civilized world have more than a passing acquaintance with the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. As a consequence are they to be classed as Christians or even practitioners of elemental morality? There is but one answer to this. There can be but one answer as to those who have read or who even in a fashion are masters of *Progress and Poverty* and who have become what we call Single Taxers. Many of them have learned about the thing which interests us merely as a matter of curious knowledge. Many will be incapable of mentally grasping the idea. Others will reject from motives of believed self-interest the lessons we would teach and thus be the better able to combat us. In a few valuable cases our principles as far as we ourselves understand them will sink deep. This small number may well be sufficient justification for all our labor.

But are there not extensive fields of knowledge relating

to the matter which we have not yet explored? Statistically do we know with any absolute feeling of certainty how this great reform will affect every member of the community today? Can we point to any exploration which has been made furnishing the answers? Argumentatively we believe our positions to be impregnable, and for one this writer cannot doubt them. Is argument, often only deductive, conclusive to inquirers or students? Can it take place of knowledge? In other words, is it from a practical point of view real education? Have we not a large amount of research work yet to do? Can we teach an exact science without much further work? Without this, is the education we have to offer much more than an exercise in dialectics? But this is all we are offering today. In raising these questions we do not doubt the usefulness of our course so far but merely inquire as to its sufficiency.

Now there are other matters we can and should present to the student, if we are to prepare him for the future. How far has what we may call *our reform* been tried out? What has been the result of any action we may have taken? What inferences may we draw from the steps we have ventured upon? What openings have there been made of which we may take advantage? Pursuing the speculative side, what can be done in the future, and how, in the many jurisdictions of this country? What instrumentalities may be invoked to aid us and in what manner? What difficulties have so far been encountered and what may be anticipated for the future, and why? Perhaps it may be argued that some of these questions, being speculative, may not be styled of the nature of education. But it cannot be denied that the raising of a question or a doubt is the first step toward its solution. There can be no real progress if these queries are to be ignored.

Let us consider the real intent and the consequent limitations of *Progress and Poverty*. Briefly we may describe it

as an answer to the riddle of the ages—why everywhere with the growth of what we style civilization there should be a parallel increase in wretchedness among mankind, and sharp differentiation between progress on the one hand and poverty on the other. George found the answer in private ownership of the wealth nature gives as shown by the advancement of society. This general theme he developed as it never had been before, while more than three score years have failed to add anything to the completeness and force of his argument or disprove the right of all men to the blessings nature has bestowed in the first place upon us.

George, as it were, led us up a high mountain and in the distance pointed out a lovely city with gleaming buildings, trees and all sorts of other pleasurable aspects. This was the city beautiful he would have all of us possess. But between the height to which he led us and the city of the future into which he would have us enter, there were many declivities and elevations, many difficult rivers to cross and deserts to pass. To all these, beyond a word, he gave little attention, for it was not important to the particular task he had in mind. He, like his predecessor Patrick Dove, was content with saying that the road would or could be traversed by the expedient of removing from industry and particularly from its product—buildings—all taxation and transferring this to land values. The task was not as simple as he stated it. If baffled at one point, our progress must be shifted to another. There will exist deviations from a direct course the better to come back to the firmer ground, as we must recognize that, like the lawyer, we are dealing with one of the most pliant and at the same time refractory elements possible—that of human nature. Upon this we have to work. Every step of the way bristles with difficulties, changes in law, changes in the attitude of people toward existing institutions, changes in human nature with

the suppression of much excessive acquisitiveness. George anticipated rightly that the road would be hard and dangerous but, rightly again, thought that success would not be impossible, even though men might well die in the struggle he advocated. But beyond the short statement above indicated he said, and in truth could know, little about the possible trials of the future.

More evident than in the time of George it has become manifest that the answer he and Dove gave to the proposition before them cannot be wholly answered by the simple transfer of taxation. The monopolization of great areas of land values, as shown in diminishing forest tracts, increases in railway importance, extension of public utilities, water-powers and knowledge of subsoil and aerial wealth, none of which advantageously controlled by taxation, have proven that taxation of land values is not the sole answer. George indicates in *Social Problems*, written not so long after his great work, that he was then fully aware of the seriousness of most of these considerations.

What does this mean with relation to education? Education must consist of more than simple knowledge of a theory. Methods of putting into play of a theory are distinctly related to knowledge of the subject, and how to make these workable is of the highest value. At the present moment, with real if only partial knowledge of the fundamentals of public ownership of land, we have not made a study of the practice of the art. Such education as we are able so far to teach is limited, and has not had, except in a small degree, the benefit of experience and thought.

Let us imagine a new apprentice to the art of carpentry being shown a house and asked to examine it in all respects, and thereupon told to construct another like it. Might he not say that he is simply a neophyte and has no knowledge of tools, that he does not know how to use the saw, the hammer, plane, level or any other instrument, that he knows nothing of materials or their strength or re-

sistance? Might not he add that he knows little of his occupation and cannot be expected to produce real results? The graduate of a school of the Single Tax who only knows the words of *Progress and Poverty* could well say the like. In either event, would not practice be a part of the needed education? Any training short of doing or attempting to do, falls short of the requirements of the situation.

If we are right, then we stand at this time in grievous need of what we may for convenience call a post-graduate course with research study and practical effort to prepare the would-be worker for graver struggle. The law student who does not look forward to conflicts at the bar or at least actual work in the profession will be but an indifferent scholar. So it is with the supposed student of the Single Tax. If he is to be of real value he must expect to prepare for the fight from the beginning of his career with us. To this end our higher education must be bent. He must know his tools.

Somewhat in the nature of the proposition we are considering we may suggest that with all his theoretic and bookish knowledge the future physician is required to pass many months as interne in hospitals and the social worker in his studies is brought into close relation in a practical way with the problems which afterward he must confront, while in many technical schools instruction and shop experience alternate before graduation. Even the academic college requires original investigation before conferring a doctor's degree. Our special schools thus appear to have much to do before their work of education is realistic and complete.

A recent book is called: *The Battle is the Pay-Off*. This is true not alone with the battle at arms. It is also true as to the struggle in which we are engaged. The fight will teach us more than can be learned in the books, and what it teaches is a part of our education. We must not be among those "who did not see the road but only saw the goal."