

## George L. Record's Address At Baltimore Congress

I HAVE spent many years in active participation in the practical politics of New Jersey in the task of creating public opinion for such projects as the abolition of privileges in taxation enjoyed by the railroads of that State, the reform of the election laws, the establishment of the direct primary, and the regulation of public utilities, all of which projects were successful to the extent of being enacted into law. I have also, as a candidate for various offices, made the Single Tax a part of my programme. I therefore naturally approach the consideration of this subject from the standpoint of practical politics. This may be premature, because such a fundamental reform as the Single Tax can not be put into practical politics until a considerable public opinion has been created by propaganda. If we can get any public man or party to advocate any measure for the taxation of land values as part of a political programme, that in itself is an effective method of propaganda.

It may also be wise to discuss the political stage in advance of its actual arrival, in order that we may be prepared to act if events should give us an opportunity, which does not now appear probable. In some respects the present is a favorable time to anticipate an opportunity to present our cause in politics, because of the unprecedented financial condition of the world at this time.

There is a perfect babel of confused counsels. The so called "best minds" of the country, to whom the people have been taught in the last fifteen years to look for financial and political guidance, are now completely discredited. This may enlarge our opportunity to get a hearing.

I therefore venture some opinions as to the most advantageous way to present the Single Tax in politics. I sometimes think that our whole method of presenting this question is a mistaken one. We talk the Single Tax, which is a remedy. It is possible that we ought to forget the remedy and present to the public the fundamental question, which is the land question, leaving the method of abolishing or lessening the privilege in land ownership to another date. The people had to be convinced slavery was wrong before they could be interested in a method of abolishing slavery. As a matter of fact in that cause the remedy was never discussed by the public because of the fact that when a considerable public opinion had been taught to see that slavery was wrong and was ripe for discussing the remedies, the slave holders, with the usual arrogance of the beneficiaries of privilege, precipitated the Civil War and slavery was abolished as an incident of the preservation of the Union.

In many campaigns I have undertaken to discuss the Single Tax to crowds at our street and hall meetings, and

I have never been able to hold the attention of the audience in the discussion of taxation. A few years ago some representatives of the New York Single Taxers volunteered to speak at my meetings, and I found that while they were intelligent they could not interest the audience. I had the same experience with some Philadelphia Single Taxers in the southern part of the State.

I am not in favor of running away from a name just because it has not been successful. I am only wondering whether we are presenting the idea in the most effective way.

When the last agitation was on in this country in support of the Irish claims for independence, I was asked to make speeches on behalf of the Irish Associations, and did so. I quoted the famous statement made by Francis Lalor, the Irish leader in 1840, to the effect that "the land of Ireland belongs to the people of Ireland." I was surprised at the very marked enthusiasm which always greeted that statement. I am satisfied that if I had undertaken to show that the Irish people ought to make the Single Tax a part of their programme, I would have made no impression.

When I come to analyze my own feelings I find that the Single Tax as a remedy never enlisted my enthusiasm. It was the land question that attracted my interest, and holds it. The proposition that the land is the gift of the Creator and, as Jefferson expressed it, "belongs in usufruct to the living" is easily comprehended by the longshoreman or the college professor. The proposition that the value of land is created by the community is always easily comprehended, is not and can not be denied, and is supported by innumerable examples in every part of the country.

It is easy to demonstrate that holding land out of use for speculation has two effects disastrous to our social welfare. First it operates to actually diminish for the time being the quantity of land which is available for use, and secondly, it enhances the cost of using such land as is actually used. The consequence is that the opportunities for the employment of labor and capital are diminished, and the cost of such production as takes place is greatly enhanced. In other words labor and capital have to pay tribute to the owner of land and he gets something for nothing. This is privilege in its most naked form. These ideas can be pushed home without raising any question of the most effective remedy.

Another line appeals to thoughtful and intelligent people. The economists agree that there are only three elements of production—land, labor and capital. The newspapers, periodicals, party conventions, politicians, associations and capitalists and trades people everywhere discuss at voluminous length labor and capital. Nobody can be induced to discuss land. How perfectly absurd it would be if our scientific investigators in the different fields of science were to locate three elements which contributed to a certain result, and to confine their study to two of the elements and utterly refuse to investigate the third.

Another line of attack is worth consideration. Mr.



Lincoln was the great lawgiver. He said there never had been but one question in all civilization, and there never would be but one question, and that was "how to prevent a few men from saying to many men, You work and earn bread and we will eat it." This is the best definition of privilege that has ever been made. When we come to apply it to our stage of civilization we are confronted with a much more difficult situation than Lincoln had to deal with. His privilege was a single one confined to a certain part of the country and to a certain class of people. It was simple, easily understood, and the appeal to do away with it was made, and had to be made, to people who were not intimately associated with it, and who were not consciously profiting by it. Our task is much more difficult.

The decisions of the Supreme Court, the investigations of Congress, the Federal Trade Commission and the Interstate Commerce Commission have shown that privilege manifests itself in this country mainly in land ownership, transportation advantages, patents and the public utility monopolies.

The beef trust has advantages in transportation denied to competitors. Their refrigerating cars are hauled eighty-three miles per day, while their competitors' cars or products are hauled at the rate of fifty-five miles per day. They own the principal stock yards. The anthracite coal trust acquired an operating mine and the control of all the railroads that tapped the coal fields, and compelled the other operators to sell out at a sacrifice by delaying their deliveries over the railroads. They have buttressed their monopoly by acquiring all of the land containing anthracite coal, the great bulk of which was acquired solely to prevent competition, because it could not be used for hundreds of years. The United States Steel Corporation acquired the control of the Mesaba iron range, and when it took over the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company it had advantages in natural resources which could not be duplicated by any competitor. They also owned railroads, and had sufficient financial power to obtain advantages in transportation over other important railroads if it was necessary to crush competition. The oil trust was built up on the railroad rebate, took over and developed the pipe line idea, and acquired extensive holdings of oil bearing lands. The aluminum trust has entire ownership of all the aluminum lands in the country. Our patent law has been developed into a form of privilege not foreseen by those who enacted the original law. We have great aggregations of capital in manufactures who buy up competing patents and hold them out of use. The public service utilities are, of course, legalized privileges. The remaining privilege is the land privilege, which we believe is most important of all.

These are the important privileges, and the immense banking resources of the country are in a broad sense behind them all. An attack upon any will bring the beneficiaries of all to a joint defense, just as Judge Lindsey found that the beneficiaries of the underworld privileges were

able to compel support by the owners of the utility privileges. These privileges can not be attacked singly, in my judgment. If we are ever to enter the political stage it must be as enemies of every form of privilege.

The public of this country has been educated by two generations of propaganda to hate monopoly. It is a part of the instinct of the American populace. When you can tie up the land question to these great monopolies you are making an effective attack.

If, however, it is timely to consider the relation of our cause to practical politics, I suggest the following as an effective political programme:

We should declare that regulation is and must continue to be a failure, because the profits are so enormous that the beneficiaries of privilege are tempted to control the government by an alliance with political machines, and so control the machinery of regulation. Our fundamental principle should be abolition of privilege of every kind.

We should stand for the public ownership and operation of an important railway from New York to Chicago, tapping the anthracite coal fields, and the public ownership of the Chicago stock yards, and the public ownership of a single important oil pipe line. This would destroy the transportation advantages of the coal trust, the beef trust, the oil trust, and the United States steel trust. The condemnation by the government of a quantity of land containing coal, oil, iron ore and aluminum, and the leasing of such lands by the government to competitors of the trusts upon moderate royalties, conditioned upon forfeiture for non-use, would actually destroy the other privileges in the coal, steel, oil and aluminum trusts. The public operation of a railroad and pipe line would result in lower transportation rates, which in the end would compel all the rest of the railroads and pipe lines to sell out their properties to the government, upon the government's own terms, which should be their fair value, payable in United States low-interest-bearing bonds, which would be paid out of the profits of operation.

All patents should be made by law open to use by anybody upon paying to the patentee a moderate royalty to be fixed by the government. This would completely destroy all monopoly based upon patents, and secure to every inventor a reasonable reward. An effective political statement of the land question is that no land should be held out of use for speculation or to sustain monopoly. Excessive incomes and fortunes should be dealt with by income and inheritance taxes. All utilities should be publicly owned and operated. The tariff should be entrusted to an executive commission to be fixed upon principle laid down by Congress.

This political programme covers the economic field completely so far as privilege is concerned. It would restore competition in all trust-controlled businesses, open all land to use, reduce the cost of every manufactured article and



every utility service, increase the demand for and the wages of labor, make more jobs than men, free the capitalistic system from the incubus of privilege, and free the government from corruption incident to the control of the privileged interests.

I submit this programme for your consideration.

It should always be borne in mind that every great idea has to be carried to the people in the beginning by so-called agitators, and that when as a result of the sacrifice and labor of these pioneers the idea reaches the political stage, the agitator seldom has any equipment for political leadership. Garrison and Phillips could never see anything in Abraham Lincoln but a political trimmer and a coward. They were unable to understand that the abolition of slavery was as dear to his heart as it possibly could be to theirs. When we reach the political stage we must be prepared for the same conditions.

However we may differ upon methods of propaganda and politics, and however discouraging our progress may seem to be, the land question is the great question of civilization, and no reasonable argument has ever been advanced against our fundamental position. In the end our cause must triumph because it is the embodiment of justice.

Let us take courage from the inspiring words of Emerson:

"The idea itself is the epoch. The fact that it has become so clear to any small number of men as to become the subject of prayer and hope and concert, that is the commanding fact. This much having come, more will follow. The star having once risen, though only one man in the hemisphere has yet seen its upper limb in the horizon, will mount and mount until it becomes visible to other men, to multitudes, and climbs the zenith of all eyes."

## The Gospel of Plenty

**I**N the present condition of things throughout the world there are many setbacks for the Henry George movement. For one, I do not blink these things, I do not minimize them. That the land hunger of the growing population of Japan should seek satisfaction through aggressive, heart-sickening war; that Britain, the last temple of free trade, should be taken over by self-seeking worshippers of protection; that landlordism everywhere should be able to build for its own defense higher and still higher walls of national prejudice and isolation—these things are saddening and discouraging.

But it would be sadder still if those who labor for the cause of justice as set forth by Henry George should count only their disappointments and temporary failures. Let us lift our heads and look about us and we shall see a whole world that has adopted half the reasoning of our great leader, making thus a condition of public thought of incalculable advantage to our movement.

George's great book, "Progress and Poverty," has two

principal parts. In the first, the author argues that the explanations of poverty current in his time—first, that capital cannot stand the drain upon it; second, that nature is "niggardly" and demands more and more of human toil as population increases—are erroneous. He demonstrates that the very reverse of these things is true: progress brings plenty, not poverty; the forces of economic production yield progressively more and more, not less and less. Finding no solution in the field of production, he infers that the solution must be sought in the field of distribution. Searching this second field, he does find the cause of poverty and is able to offer a simple and effective remedy.

It is quite true that the world at large has not a proper understanding of Henry George's reasoning on these points of diagnosis and remedy. The belief prevails that everything in human society can be "fixed" if only a majority can be got for the "fixing" proposal. The fact that the body social has its natural organs and functions as truly as the body physical is unknown or disregarded. At present, the second part of "Progress and Poverty" is not understood, and therefore is not accepted.

But let it not be forgotten that when the book was published, in 1879, the whole world of thought was deadly opposed to the first part also. Henry George stood absolutely alone in declaring on grounds of fact and logic that this is a world of plenty, not of dearth. He could not quote one single thinker as agreeing with him. True, there were believers in Divine Providence who held that religion was the cure of poverty and all other ills, but their declaration was based on faith, revelation or authority, not on investigation of the economic facts. All the so-called thinkers upheld the dour doctrine of Malthus, that population tends to increase more rapidly than subsistence. The idea that plenty was possible, natural, inevitable, actual, was denied and derided by them all.

What a change has come over the world of thought since that day! All who pretend to teach the people in this age say what George said over fifty years ago—that modern discoveries, inventions and methods have made possible the production of far more of every kind of supply than the people can use. In fact some see this actual or possible supply as a danger. They tell us that there is overproduction and therefore want—certainly a queer notion. But the ordinary man does not need to consult authorities on the subject, for he knows that there is not a thing that he can wish for that is not already produced and on the market.

Men may deny the correctness of George's diagnosis of our economic problem, they may scout the remedy he proposed, but they cannot, and do not, find fault with his conclusion that abundance has actually been achieved and that, the problem of production being thus solved, we must seek our answer in the field of distribution.

This abundance which exists today was not made in obedience to any royal command, nor in compliance with