

strength of its great organization to completing its own conception by demanding the release of ALL lands served by the proposed system of highways, from the present fiscal handicaps on production? Better highways are an invitation to more production. Why not recognize this logical relation? Why should production be charged with costs which revert to the advantage of non-productive interests? Why not, in short, concentrate on a demand for a Federal Land Tax, out of which the cost of the roads could be paid? For State roads, a State Land Tax. Speculative realty interests might be less enthusiastic over the Association's project. On the other hand, the great productive interests of the country would rally to its support.

The Association's scheme, as it now stands, is a pretty clear case of putting the cart before the horse. Of course, most public improvements are hitched up that way. But that makes it no more efficient and no less absurd.

The Land Question Before the Peace Congress

Introduced by Mexico

DIPLOMATIC reserve on the part of the governments more immediately involved has kept from publicity the official documents recently exchanged regarding the serious international controversy over the Mexican Oil Land legislation.

The controversy, however, is now to be transferred to the world Conference at Paris. Mexico has nominated her delegates in the case, and hopes to provoke an international decision confirming her contention as to the sovereignty of States over the soil within their territory.

The issue is one in which Single Taxers have a very special interest. The Mexican Government makes the old and dangerous claim to titular ownership; whereas Single Taxers believe that essential sovereignty does not call for titular ownership, but is amply satisfied by payment into the public treasury of all social values attaching to the soil. The government has also, in its representation of the whole people, the sovereign prescriptive right to interdict such wasteful or otherwise improper use of natural resources as might prejudice the well being of the present and future generations. The destruction of our own American forests, without any provision for replanting, was a criminal abuse of private ownership and a criminal neglect of sovereignty on the part of the State. The case of our own oil resources is almost identical. The principle of conservation, which should inspire our Government, has been a dead letter. If, in this respect, the Mexican Government desires to act on a higher plane of public interest, we, who have wasted our opportunities, have no right to object.

The Mexican Government has an unequalled opportunity for conciliating democratic opinion in all countries and provoking an international pronouncement that would

be a real gain in the conception and exercise of essential sovereignty for all nations. To accomplish this requires but a slight re-adjustment of Mexico's claims, attested to by an equivalent re-adjustment of her disputed legislative action.

In the first place, she should define her claim to sovereignty over the soil as limited to the public values attached thereto, and to the right of intervention in order to prevent wasteful and abusive exploitation of natural resources. In the second place, the claim should be made, not in respect of any particular section of the soil but in respect to the whole.

In such a claim, and for legislation embodying its principles, Mexico would, as we have said, have the support of all democratic peoples and have fairly earned the unique and enviable honor of writing into the history of the world a new Magna Charta for mankind. There exist no reputable interests compromised by such a proposal nor any others powerful enough effectively to oppose it. It can be defeated only by its own advocates confusing it with extraneous and irrelevant, if not antagonistic, issues.

Single Taxers throughout the world will do well to watch carefully the course of proceedings at Paris, in this great debate as to the relations of individuals and their governments to the soil, the fundamental question in economics, whose just solution is the imperative condition of human progress.

Samuel Milliken

IN December we lost one of our most able and tireless workers for the Single Tax in the death of Samuel Milliken, of Philadelphia. He became interested in the movement over thirty years ago after being convinced of the truth and importance of the cause by reading "Progress and Poverty" which was a great inspiration to him. By years of practice he became the most able and active writer on the philosophy of Henry George in his native city. In addition to hundreds of articles on Single Tax, Free Trade and other subjects he was the principal contributor to the "Mail Bag" of *The Philadelphia Record*, one of the leading morning papers of large circulation.

Once Mr. Milliken, who was of modest and retiring disposition, suggested to the editorial manager of *The Record* that it might be well for him to take a rest as perhaps it would be better not to publish any more of his letters for awhile. He was promptly told that they were glad to get all the letters he would write for them.

During the Delaware Campaign, Mr. Milliken gave a year's work as secretary at headquarters without a cent of salary and contributed in money besides.

Brilliant as a thinker and writer, scholarly, modest, a devoted and earnest worker, Samuel Milliken was one of those rare souls of which it can truly be said, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He has gone from among us but the good he has done will remain.

WM. L. ROSS.