

The Mencken Inferiority Complex

AN animated sneer, labelled by its progenitor Henry L. Mencken, loses no opportunity for classing the advocates of the Single Tax with the socialists, prohibitionists, and adherents to various isms who, he claims, are trying to deprive the small and select coterie of alleged intellectuals to which he belongs of their dearly-won liberties. When he first found occasion to include Single Taxers in his list of objectionable persons it may be charitably supposed that he was merely guilty of gross carelessness in criticizing a philosophy of which he knew nothing. Someone must have politely informed him as to his mistake, with the result that instead of mending his manners he has gone out-of-his-way to exhibit his obsession on the subject of the Single Tax.

"Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance," was Dr. Johnson's explanation of his mistake in regard to a certain bone in the horse's leg. Ignorance, or malice actuated by envy of the superior intelligence of men and women who have a reasonable explanation of economic phenomena that he cannot understand, must be the reason why the Mencken person finds it necessary to assail and misrepresent what is essentially a movement for human freedom.

Profoundly ignorant of economic laws; shallow, bumptious, arrogant and insolent, by dint of iteration of a few shopworn phrases Mencken has succeeded in getting a following among the educated "boobery" that is unable to distinguish between knowledge and pretense. Bluff, bluster, and a facility for calling names, constitute the Mencken stock-in-trade, and in the welter of ignorance on subjects of real importance that prevails among the writers of the day, in the popular expression he, "gets away with it."

Evidence that he recognizes his own inferiority is exhibited by the editor of the *Smart Set* throughout his anti-Single Tax lucubrations. He doesn't know what the Single Tax is, or what it will do. To his shallow mind anything that he is not able to comprehend must be wrong, and its advocates fools. As an individual Mencken is not worth a passing notice. As a typical representative of the supercilious intelligentsia that can only sneer and make faces at ideas beyond its ability to understand, he is easily Exhibit A.