

One Phase of our Misguided Activities

IT will perhaps be of interest to review one phase of Single Taxers' activities for two or three decades, a phase now demonstrably a failure and approaching an inglorious close. It is that phase of our movement dominated by the policy of "lining up" with the Democratic Party in the belief that it was "going in our direction." That phrase was delusive enough to deceive most of us.

There was this justification for Henry George. Grover Cleveland had thrown his tariff message as a gage of battle into the arena, and for some time the tariff question promised a debate no longer confined to questions of percentages, but full of possibilities in the opening up of the great questions of freedom versus restriction. A short interval of time served to undeceive us. But we were ready at the next campaign to be deceived again.

"Going in our direction." The poor old Democratic Party! What genius was it who first symbolized it as a donkey—a sort of pack-mule of a party laden with a burden of odds and ends of all sorts of economic and political nostrums? William J. Bryan is indeed its ideal leader, a combination of fanaticism and calculating opportunism, of smug, out-of-date evangelicalism and appalling lack of intellectual knowledge (note his recent incredible comment on what he thinks Charles Darwin taught) and a readiness to accept or cast aside every new or out-worn political garment. At the command of our leaders we Single Taxers, bearers of the greatest message ever vouchsafed to mankind, threw our hats in the air and cheered for Bryan, only to have him tell his hearers in a speech made in Delaware that an income tax is preferable to the Single Tax.

"Going in our direction." The Democratic Party was a free trade, or low tariff party, we were told. Yet its mainstay were the Southern Bourbons, who, when industry at the South became diversified, were, for the most part, supporters of the protective tariff. From the Republican State of Pennsylvania the party's chief representative was Samuel J. Randall, as high a protectionist as "Pig Iron" Kelly of those days, and belonging to the same class of "statesmen." But nevertheless our throats were hoarse with huzzas, for were they not "going in our direction?" And in those years we never, never, never made a single convert to the Single Tax of any distinguished Democrat—not one. Yet even to this day, so strong is tradition and habits of thought, that to question the wisdom of giving our votes to the Democratic Party in preference to the Republicans, or to a Single Tax Party standing outright for our principles, would cause a chorus of disapproval—not quite so strong as formerly, for we do learn, though slowly.

Yet why not to the Republican Party? Surely as good a case can be made out for one as for the other—perhaps an even better case. For the Western Republicans had always been low tariff men. The *Chicago Tribune*, chief

representative of the Republicans west of Ohio, had always been a low tariff paper. Blaine's reciprocity scheme—"free trade on the half-shell," as it was termed—would have worked out toward a lower tariff than anything the Democratic Party was willing to give us. And McKinley's great Buffalo speech hinted at an abandonment of the old economic belief.

On the land question the record of the Republican Party was clearly to be preferred. It had arisen out of the old Free Soil Party, with its bold declaration of human rights in the earth. One of its great figures was Galusha Grow, whose splendid utterances on the land question thrill us after two and more generations. (See *SINGLE TAX YEAR BOOK*, pages 302-303.) He not only got the Homestead Law through, which gave the land to the people, as he understood it, but as a recognition of his great services to the people he was re-elected to Congress by the Republican Party years after—about two decades ago—at a time when the Democrats had gone back on Grover Cleveland and the tariff issue.

Our continued support of the Democratic Party is an example of base ingratitude in the light of events. Whenever Single Taxers got anything it came from the Republicans. Pennsylvania, a Republican State, gave us the half-rate tax on improvements for second class cities. The measure was passed by a Republican legislature and signed by a Republican governor. In the State of Minnesota a Republican tax commission appointed by a Republican governor brought in the most radical and far-reaching tax report which has yet seen the light. The sweeping changes in land tax laws in North Dakota were not given us by Democrats but by Republican farmers. It was not the Democratic candidate for governor, though a Single Taxer, in the last gubernatorial campaign in this State from whom, had he been successful, that much was to be expected, for when challenged by his Republican opponent to avow or disavow his belief in the Single Tax, he ran to shelter with a cowardly evasion. But it was the successful Republican candidate for office who in a statesmanlike utterance reported in the last number of the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW* lined himself up squarely with those who advocate the exemption of improvements and the taxation of land values as a question of paramount importance to the farmers of the State. It was a Republican president, too, who gave the strongest endorsement to the Single Tax, and who, though only willing to have it tried out in Alaska, was at least willing to have it tried *somewhere*.

This brief resume disposes of one stock argument of those who oppose independent political action by Single Taxers. By such action, we are told, we alienate men of other political parties. Yet in spite of our support of the Democratic Party we apparently did not alienate the Republicans who have always been more intelligently appreciative of the needs of genuine land and tax reform. We do not need to say that reasons for supporting the Republicans in preference to the Democrats are not just as good, but at least they are no worse. They, too, appear

to be "going in our direction." But perhaps if we advertised the fact that hereafter we were going to cast our votes for the Republican Party we might get from that party just as little as we ever got from the Democrats. Of one thing we can be certain, and of only one thing—a Single Tax party with a Single Tax platform is indeed "going in our direction."

A Single Taxer's Work in China

JUST how much of the democratic ferment in China that has resulted in the changed attitude of so many of the Chinese people, is due to the modest efforts of one individual will probably never be known. But it is certain that the literary and educational work of W. E. Macklin has had its influence in breaking down or weakening many traditional institutions, and the bringing of a new light to the understanding of thousands of thoughtful Chinese students.

Mr. Macklin early conceived the idea of giving to the Chinese a knowledge of the great leaders who have given us our liberties. As a life of Washington had already been translated, he added to this a life of Thomas Jefferson with the Declaration of Independence. Later he translated the Life of William the Silent (Motley's Rise of the Dutch Republic) This work was soon put on the list of subjects for the examination of students. He then began work on the great heroes of English history, such as Alfred the Great, Stephen Langton, who gave us the House of Commons, Cromwell, Milton, Hampden, Pym, Wilberforce, Thomas More, Wesley, etc. He finished a life of Wycliffe taken from Greene's history of the English People. Then followed a translation of Greene's History which was completed in five years. The British Consul recommended it to the Viceroy, who wrote a preface for it. Later Viceroys Chen Foo and Chang praised the work and wrote Mr. Macklin in congratulation. The Viceroy, Twan Fan, who wrote the preface for Mr. Macklin's translation of Greene, notices the contribution to the cause of liberty made by great Christian leaders.

Mr. Macklin has just succeeded in printing a life of Gustavus Adolphus from Schiller's Thirty Years' War, which he completed after a year's labor. Henry George's Progress and Poverty, his Protection or Free Trade, Spencer's Social Statics, and Dove's Theory of Human Progression, are other works which this indefatigable worker has rendered into Chinese.

In a recent letter Mr. Macklin says: "I have been oppressed by the robbery and extortion which are coming to China under the cloak of philanthropy and have translated Henry Demorest Lloyd's Wealth Against Commonwealth, and it has been taken up by the big dailies. I have finished translating Ida Tarbell's History of the Standard Oil and it is being printed in book form. One large daily has offered to print it serially. I have to thank Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fels for their generous help in all this work."

Things Do Not Stay Equal

THAT one New Jersey editor knows "what is what" is shown by the following from the *Daily Record* of Long Branch:

"We find in the recent encyclopedic and commendable message of Mayor Flock the statement that excessive charges for public utilities have a tendency to prevent and discourage investment, and the development and improvement of real estate. If excessive charges exist in a municipality for public utility service property becomes unsalable; the place is avoided and decays.

"We have no particular objection to this statement. It runs along with general public sentiment, and seems to be axiomatic. Naturally, if water and gas rates were four times as high as they are, it would be less desirable to live in Long Branch than it is, other things being equal. And if water and both gas and electric light were furnished gratis in unlimited quantities, it would be more desirable to live and do business here, other things being equal.

"The difficulty in too readily accepting the Mayor's pronouncement as reaching the bottom is this: Other things do not stay equal. Improvements and reductions in cost of public utilities are accompanied by a shifting of conditions.

"The Mayor could not guarantee that other things would be equal. The natural result of the public ownership of public utilities in Long Branch and the reduction of a minimum of rates for utility service would be the encouragement of both progressive and speculative investments, and a new level of values of 'property,' would be reached.

"The experience of other cities shows that the people cannot get something for nothing, unless they privately own something that public progress may increase in value,

"Wherever there is progress there is what is called a boom, and the proper function of a boom seems to be to prevent most people getting any advantage from progress. For them is the skim milk.

"So no one need enthuse too much on the general situation to be brought about by public ownership of each and every Long Branch public utility.

"Some day, after the war, and after he decides to travel for pleasure, the Mayor can visit a German city which levies no taxes, provides all public utilities at low cost, gives the young men a financial start in life and the young women each a dowry, but still the millenium has not been reached. The city is owned by a few people, and they charge for everything currently there to be obtained."

SINGLE TAXERS might do worse than re-read the works of Henry George, not in search of new points for dialectical difference with fellow reformers, but in order to bring into the settlement of the present-day economic disorder the marvelous weapons forged in that inspired brain and prepared against this time of perplexity and need. No later writers have equalled George's precision of statement and breadth of vision.