

## \*AN INTERESTING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

\*Triumphant Plutocracy, by R. F. Pettigrew. Formerly U. S. Senator from South Dakota. The Academy Press, 112 Fourth Avenue, New York City.

In this book whose title parodies Andrew Carnegie's forgotten and vainglorious "Triumphant Democracy," of which Carnegie himself was the perfect flower, ex-Senator Pettigrew tells the story of his public career and gives his impressions and the measures that occupied a large place in the public eye during the past forty years. The book is published under Socialist auspices and should serve admirably their purpose of nurturing suspicion in the public mind that both of the great parties are so hopelessly corrupt that any attempt to reform them is mere waste of time.

Senator Pettigrew is no literary man. He is a "prentice hand" at bookmaking. His method of compilation is exasperating to the orderly mind. Hence none of the impression which the book must make on the candid reader can be ascribed to his skill in presenting his subject. Nevertheless it must be conceded that he presents a state of facts which should cause every patriotic citizen the gravest concern.

He seems to have found as few just men in Washington as God found in Sodom and Gomorrah, and he seems to feel that the fate which befell the Cities of the Plain might well visit the District of Columbia. He had personal relations with ten Presidents and to none of them does he give the credit of having an eye single to the public welfare. To many, this attitude will indicate that he is merely a fault-finder who condemns all who differ with him. But he has very clear and conclusive claims on public confidence. Did he not fight Mark Hanna in the very heyday of his corrupt power? Did not Hanna deem him sufficiently dangerous to justify his making a personal tour of South Dakota to bring about his defeat, incidentally expending to that end half a million dollars which was quite a sum to distribute in a small State with less than 100,000 voters? Did not Theodore Roosevelt say of him, in a telegram to Senator Platt: "Good Lord, I hope that we can beat Pettigrew for the Senate. That particular swine seems to me, on the whole, the most obnoxious of the entire drove." A man who earned such compliments from competent judges cannot be dismissed as a mere Sorehead.

He has an interesting passage in relation to ex-President Wilson, whom he visited by invitation in 1911, when the then Governor of New Jersey was seeking the Presidential nomination. He had his doubts as to Wilson's fitness for the Presidency because he was a lawyer and he thought that all men well learned in the law believe that property rights and not human rights are sacred, but he gives the following reason for leaning to Wilson. "He (Wilson) had declared for the public ownership of public resources—that is, iron and oil, and had suggested the Single Tax as a method of taking the raw materials from the trusts and combinations, such as iron, oil etc." Interesting if true, but no reference is given and we do not remember any such straight-out pronouncement by Mr. Wilson.

The net impression produced by Senator Pettigrew's book is that the author is an honest, self-willed man with a limited economic education, which makes it possible for him to believe that there can be such a thing as "honest protection," or that socialist doctrine can lead to practically beneficial results. The chief value of his book will be to open some eyes to the persistent raids on public property made by tireless and unchanging corporations regardless of what administration happens to be in power, for the predatory interests have their friends on both sides of the political dividing line and about all that the voters decide in elections is which group of special interests will get the favors that it seeks. The book is full of inaccuracies which are inexcusable. Benjamin Harrison is referred to as Henry William Harrison. Wilson is spoken of as having "practiced law in his native State, Alabama." Senator Pettigrew speaks of his own indictment by a Federal Grand Jury for publishing matter intended to obstruct recruiting during the war, but fails to mention what was the cause of the indictment. If this book was worth writing at all, and we think it was, it should have been done more carefully.

## CORRESPONDENCE

## LAND NATIONALIZATION OR SINGLE TAX

## EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

Twenty-five years ago, as a boy in the Niagara Peninsula of Ontario, I was struck by the fact that men on fruit land selling for five hundred to a thousand dollars an acre, found it necessary to contend for a maintenance of tariff protection in order to retain the Ontario fruit market so that they could make ends meet. Some wanted a still higher tariff, presumably so that fruit lands might rise to a still greater altitude. Later on I was impressed with the incongruity or injustice of a similar demand from the fruit growers of British Columbia.

Some years ago I moved to the Peace River country and took up my favorite occupation of farming. Agitation was on foot to secure railroad extension. It was opposed by certain men seeking an alternative project in order to develop townsite speculations they had in hand. I began to think; and then it dawned upon me more clearly than ever before what gross injustices lurked in the present scheme of things.

Here was my neighbor ten miles distant. Suppose the railroad ran through my land and established a town there. I could sell my land, or some of it, for a big price, get in on the ground floor of the real estate, mercantile and industrial enterprises centering there and become rich. The neighbor ten miles away who had been in the country longer than I and had done as much, or more, to develop the region to a point where railroad construction was justifiable, would possibly have his farm property doubled in value, but his increment would be but a small fraction of mine and he would still have to travel to my town over the roads and bridges his taxes had helped to build. Was it fair?

As the idea expanded I began to realize the abuse that lies in the private ownership of land, which capitalizes in the interest of the land owner a steady increment in value which the collective effort of the community creates. And the more that may be done to make a given area of land valuable, as by irrigation or superior methods or the introduction of new or productive crops, the more the land rises in value.

The land owner benefits, but the worker as such derives little or no benefit from the change. Rent is the great automatic absorber of profit.

I have come to the conclusion that private ownership of land and natural resources is wrong in principle and must be superseded by collective ownership with a system of leasehold to users, the leases to afford satisfactory security of tenure and be open to competition in original acquirement but subject to periodic readjustment of rentals as taxes are now adjusted. Of course there would be no immediate advantage from the adoption of such a system unless present values were confiscated, but from the day of public acquisition the further increment would accrue to the public and rents would ultimately pay taxes. New towns could most readily adopt the scheme.

A sharp distinction should be drawn between public ownership and public operation. The world is not ready for the latter on any large scale.

I may say that these ideas have been evolved wholly through a process of original thinking, reasoning from observed phenomena and axiomatic facts. I have never read a book on the subject nor even a pamphlet.

As for Single Tax, my question is this:

Will it, in the final analysis, effectually regulate the evils that spring from the private ownership of land or will it merely act as a palliative?

Shall we ever attain economic justice so long as man holds title to that which nature provided and which the collective effort of the nation makes valuable?

Beaverlodge, Alberta, Canada.

W. D. ALBRIGHT.

## REPLY

Our correspondent has stated very well the fundamental wrong of our present system of private ownership of land and the collection of rent by individuals. We think the Single Tax will accomplish the same results as the plan of government ownership and leasing which he suggests, and be far more easy of practical application. Under a leasing system, the question of proper compensation for improvements