

It ill becomes the other side, who also will not think, to talk of the restrictions of trade and labor unions, and ignore all others. For these men should know better. They have leisure, or more leisure at least, and greater opportunity. Their lives have not been lives of incessant toil. For the most part they have had the advantages of longer schooling and higher culture. If they do not know the meaning of trade union restrictions and the problem underlying employment, their case is no whit better than that of the members of the Building Trades.

What if some more intelligent members of the Building Trades should address the Chamber of Commerce—and Chambers of Commerce are composed largely of the representatives of the privileged interests—somewhat to this effect:

"We ask the removal of the restrictions you have imposed upon industry; we ask the removal of the limitations you place upon employment. You have established a system of tribute on industry levied by landlordism; you have drawn a paper title fence around ever so many vacant lots in the city of Cleveland, on which labor, and the capital that would follow it, cannot go save by the payment of a higher price than it can now afford to pay. You have established a system of taxation that further restricts employment. Let it be a bargain; if you will abolish *your* restrictions, we will abolish *ours*."

How many of these self-righteous members of the Chamber of Commerce would be willing to heed such an appeal? Very few, we fancy. Receivers of rent, owners of vacant lots, shifters of taxation on to the shoulders of others, as most of them are, *these* kinds of restrictions on industry they do not propose to abolish. And this makes all such appeals to labor organizations, or the abuse of them, full of a naive hypocrisy of which we cannot help but believe many of them are more than half conscious.

Poisoning the Wells

UNDER the heading, "Rainbow Chasers," the Los Angeles *Sunday Times*, of February 26th, collected a larger number of erroneous statements as to the meaning and purposes of the Single Tax philosophy than we have ever before seen gathered together in a single article. The editorial writer must maintain a scrap book in which he carefully pastes all the plausible misrepresentations of the Single Tax that he can find while eschewing all correct representations of it. He finds no difficulty in demolishing the straw men which he sets up, but he never touches the reality of Single Tax at all. We would apologize for wasting our readers' time in the refutation of his errors, but that other hostile editors are likely to parrot them and it may be worth while to have the answers handy.

Error No. 1.—The Single Tax would make "*real estate* the only source of taxable revenue." Apart from the clumsy and inaccurate phrase, "taxable revenue," the Single Tax would not tax real estate, which in common

parlance means land *and improvements*, but only land according to its value exclusive of improvements. The difference is not superficial but fundamental.

Error No. 2.—"Voltaire wrote against the Single Tax." Even if he did, his condemnation would have no element of finality. Voltaire had no conception of the Single Tax in its modern meaning. The physiocrats used the term "impot unique," but related it only to agricultural land. While we are proud to count them among our economic ancestors, we know that the conditions when they lived were not such as to make it possible for them to comprehend what is clear to us.

Errors 3, 4 and 5.—Henry George "arrived at the conclusion that all land should belong to the governed, should be common property. Should be taxed so heavily that it would no longer be profitable to its owners." To Single Taxers it will, of course, be unnecessary to point out that Henry George did not advocate either nationalization of the land or communism of land, and that he advocated taking in taxes only the value which the land derived from the presence of population and services of government.

Error No. 6.—"The faithful followers of Henry George believe that none would be rich and none poor if all the land were owned by the government." We repeat that no faithful follower of Henry George believes in government ownership of the land.

Error No. 7.—"Henry George's theory has been put to a concrete test in a number of communities in various parts of the world and has registered an unbroken succession of disastrous failures." Henry George's theory has never had a concrete test anywhere. Enthusiasts and opponents of the Single Tax have at various times and in various places heralded certain fiscal experiments in land value taxation as the adoption of the Single Tax in those places, and when such places experienced the ordinary vicissitudes of boom towns and counties, the cry was raised, "The Single Tax has failed," much as people have cried that competition has failed, democracy has failed and even Christianity has failed, when none of them has had a real trial. Moreover, no community in Australia or New Zealand which has tried the policy of exemption of improvements and taxation of land values for local purposes has gone back to the old system such as exists in California. In Canada, they have, in some communities, put back buildings on the assessment lists, but only at half their value. On this point it might be well to cite the example of the City of New York where, having made one year's experiment of exempting new buildings from taxation, they liked the results so well that the policy was extended for another year by the unanimous action of both parties in the legislature.

Error No. 8.—Now comes the great effect to which all other errors are only introductions. Will it surprise the Single Taxers to know that the Single Tax was put into effect by Lenin and Trotsky when the government ownership of the land was introduced in Russia? Yet that is in substance what this editorial writer avers. He says, "One

would think that such a harrowing example would cause Single Tax advocates to stop, look and listen." But alas, no! They are so wedded to this false theory that they would bring California to the pass which has befallen Russia rather than confess their error.

In spite of the silliness of all this clap-trap it has the value of indicating the plan likely to be pursued in the next campaign against the Single Tax in California. We shall be told that because the Socialists, whom we have been fighting for forty years, came into control of the Russian government on the downfall of the Czar, put the Single Tax into effect on getting into power and made an awful fiasco, therefore the Single Tax is dangerous to civilization. Even Lenin has come to see that it will not work. No wonder that he is to come to Genoa! He may even go to Los Angeles, to help the Otises and their ilk against the Single Tax fight to redeem California from the clutch of the land monopolists. The most powerful supporters of the established order are the wrong-headed radicals who recant.

The Producer

WHEN Lamb confessed that he was "sentimentally disposed to harmony, but organically incapable of a tune," he was expressing a contradiction of will and faculty such as I recognize as affecting my excursions into economics.

For example, I have been frequently bewildered by the philosophy of Single Tax. I find many occasions to like Single Taxers. I have been fascinated by the picture they draw of conditions that will prevail when Single Tax is in operation. But despite a suspicion of inadequacy in my own reasoning—a suspicion emphasized by many a blunder—I continue to question the logic of Single Tax. I keep on seeing tax not as expressing a need to regulate or rebuke, but simply as expressing a need for the money. I keep on seeing basic land taxes as general club dues. I see supplementary property taxes as a corollary of property protection and of various phases of property privilege. I see the club member who uses the billiard-room implements as paying a special fee. The land doesn't need a fire department, a plumbing inspector, or a school superintendent. A skyscraping apartment building holding fifty families asks more service and more implements than the mere land. In that proportion the house committee called the government asks more money. If the club has a very expensive lawsuit—call it a war—the club treasurer may insist upon a special assessment, not because you are a guilty member, but because once more he simply needs the money. And so on. You may know how these can't-see-Single Tax people think. At some point I must be wrong. That is inevitable—even if I am right. But I don't know just where. Like most other people in the same situation, I *think* I am open-minded, yet I may be shut-minded at the very point where conviction might get through.

I illustrate the same obscurity as to the preachment that "all wealth comes from the land." I see all life as deriving its physical nourishment from the land (and the air and sunlight), and I am assured that all material things are derived from the land, but the scientific definitions of wealth that name land and labor as the producers of wealth leave me groping. The Thinker's part in the partnership seems to be silent, but it seems to me to be real. I see the

production of wealth in the union of raw material, physical effort and the Idea. In primitive production the laborer may embody the idea, and the partnership may be that much simpler. But obviously all production is not so simple as that. A field of corn may be raised on elemental partnership terms, but a steamship or a printing press or a wireless telephone system is another matter. I want to make room for a Fulton, an Edison, and a Wright in the partnership, as well as for a Galileo, a Columbus, and a Pasteur. Though I be held to the fixed definition of wealth, and to all of Karl Marx's "socially necessary" implications, I still feel that there should be room for Marx himself; that wealth is derived also from the man who tells where and how to produce it and where and how to distribute it. I still feel that ideas are the foremost of all factors in production, that ideas themselves are a product. (From "The Latest Thing and Other Things," by ALEXANDER BLACK.)

We reprint the foregoing from a most interesting collection of essays by an extremely interesting man, Alexander Black, a New York author and editor, whose fame is wide but whose fame would be much wider than it is, if our reading public had more brains—for his books do need some brains for their proper assimilation. His two latest novels, "The Great Desire" and "The Seventh Angel" are the best presentations of war and post-war reactions on certain sections of our people that anyone has written. We confidently recommend them to our readers.

This recommendation has, of course, no bearing on Mr. Black's inability to grasp the Single Tax philosophy. We all have our blind spots. Mr. Black's may be in economics. We remember once, after a long conversation, that William Dean Howells remarked, "I wish to God I could see in your idea what you and your friends do. It seems to make you optimistic. For my part the more I study social relations the more pessimistic I become." So Mr. Black is in very good company in not being able to comprehend our philosophy. We think it worth while to take up the points, which he does make and see if we can explain them. He says "I keep on seeing tax not as expressing a need to regulate or rebuke but simply as expressing a need for money." We fear Mr. Black is a poor sportsman if he objects to killing two birds with one shot merely because he intended to bag only one. The need for government revenue is admitted; we may gratify it in a way which is harmful to the community or helpful. It is bound to be either one or the other. There are no such things as neutral taxes. They must be levied on privilege or industry. If on the latter they raise prices, if on the former they tend to repress monopoly, it seems clear to Single Taxers that an intelligent man confronted with these alternatives has no choice but to impose them on the former.

"Basic land taxes are general club dues," is quite a good definition, but then he goes on to regard property taxes as paid for protection, etc. But the Single Taxer contends this was one of the things included in the "club dues." Does Mr. Black, perhaps, belong to a club in which he has to pay a special tax for the care of his hat and umbrella when he dines there. Of course he pays extra for his food,