

# At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYE

LARRY WIGGINS let loose on the Professor the other night, to the Professor's discomfiture. Dowdy was saying that "pussy-footism" had its advantages, in that it permitted Single Taxers to "slip it over" without the trouble of "putting it over." As an example, he cited the story of the Pittsburgh Plan, as upheld and glorified by that substantial Pittsburgher, Harry Willock. "I know what you are referring to" said Wiggins. "I've had the recital from Mr. Willock himself and I've heard him lecture on it in public. According to Mr. Willock the Pittsburgh Plan was 'slipped over' by the merest fluke, the politicians who fathered it knowing nothing of its nature or intent. I find you and Mr. Willock now arguing that this silly back-stairs method of cajoling legislators to play the game of the blind leading the blind is all right provided the outcome is fairly successful. Rats! Even if Mr. Willock should cease magnifying the actual results of this cautious, mind-your-step, Pittsburgh measure, would you maintain that the end justifies the means every time? Even if the American public can be fooled so easily is honesty with the public a good policy in the long run or not? Single Taxers delude themselves if they think they can 'slip over' anything which is of real importance. If a Single Tax measure has 'teeth' in it the watch-dogs of privilege will smell it out mighty quick and raise the devil of a howling. When it comes to a dog-fight Single Taxers have got to fight the other dog and take the usual chances, as all good dogs do. Why should Single Taxers be afraid of telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help them God—unless" (and here Wiggins looked meaningly at the Professor) "these so-called Single Taxers do not know the rudiments of the Single Tax?"

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Upton Sinclair's recent book, "The Goose Step," the theme of which is the success of colleges in imparting a spirit of bigotry, intolerance and suspicion toward ideas, and in which he shows that everywhere, in every issue involving a conflict between the people and special privilege, the universities and colleges are on the side of special privilege, is a courageous piece of work and a good one—another document by perhaps the greatest of contemporary muckrakers. It is packed full of information brought down to date. Sinclair is a genius in journalism—his journalism rises to the heights of fine art. He writes with powerful dynamic energy and one wonders at the enormous amount of his product. He ought to be applauded and read.

At the same time one deprecates his perverseness in fighting shy of the fundamental issue, his alertness of method and huge fund of information seeming to show that he knows who the real nigger in the wood-pile is while disingenuously hiding this knowledge from the reader.

Or are we mistaken, and is Upton Sinclair merely another example of the brilliant mind that reflects all the casual rays of non-constructive thought without the power to absorb and patiently consider the tough, hard inwardness of things? The journalist may sometimes be an artist, but is ever the seer, the truth-loving poet and prophet a journalist? Not so. Deeper than ever plummet sounded goes his thought into the nature of things.

Unfortunately for Upton Sinclair we have knowledge that on one occasion at least he came plump in contact with the fundamental issue and it proved too much for him. Leaving off for a short time his artistic thrumming on the strings of the "class struggle" and the other thematic chamber-music of socialism, Upton Sinclair went into the last Luke North campaign in California with a child's impetuosity and delight, but also, as it proved, with a child's peevishness and disappointment at failure to achieve success. According to Sinclair what he had a right to expect was a State-wide reversal of popular thought on economics and, presto, an immediate swallowing of the whole Single Tax proposition, bait, hook and sinker.

Alas, even in Socialist circles, things do not turn out that way. Then Sinclair said, "I'm done with a proposition which the farmers, whom it would most benefit, do not, will not, cannot see!" Query: did Upton see it himself? Well, let us hope that some day this brilliant writer may absorb the strong, actinic rays which light up the land question. His writing may then become dazzling indeed. Instead of fumbling through a shadowy economic twilight with a few distant stars casting their pale and ineffectual fires, he may dip his pen in the sunlight and write across the open vault of Heaven the name of Upton Sinclair, who taught the people their inalienable rights to the use of this Earth. That would be glory indeed!

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Horace Wenzel authorizes us to offer a prize of twenty-five dollars for the best essay on the subject of "How far has the Single Tax been applied in Soviet Russia?" Mr. Wenzel, at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle, explained his astonishing idea in the following words: "I dare say you fellows will think me crazy. Perhaps I am a nut, but I love to solve hard problems, especially when they are financial and economic. I am a free lance, as you know—a cynical critic of the good, the beautiful and the true. It is because you have treated me with open-mindedness and hospitality at the Cat and the Fiddle that I have abstained from giving expression to certain ideas which you doubtless look upon with abhorrence—one of which is the possibility of others than Single Taxers discovering economic light in dark places. Now as to Russia. When I learned that

communism was being applied after the November revolution of 1917 and understood that Lenin and his friends were attempting to carry out on a large scale the dicta of the famous Communist Manifesto of 1848. 'Here,' I said to myself, 'is an experiment worth watching.' Especially interesting to a student of the Single Tax was the early proclamation of the bolshevists, declaring the abolition of private property in land throughout Russia.

"Here indeed was half of the first demand of the Manifesto put into effect, the other half, you will remember, being that the annual value of land must be collected by the State. Now I believe there is abundant evidence to show that in a crude way, during a period when money was utterly discredited and transportation brought to a standstill, when a third of the land area of the world was blockaded by enemies and production was all but destroyed by prolonged civil war, I believe there is evidence that the economic wages of labor were humanely equalized and made sufficient to maintain a decent livelihood for each family group, while the surplus product of every farm was collected as a common rent fund for the use of the armies in the field and the workers in munition and other factories. But for this great supply of food the Soviet State would have been unable to function and overcome its armed enemies. I am offering my prize for the purpose of collecting evidence and proof of the foregoing."

The Conductor of this Department is happy to comply with Mr. Wenzel's request that the SINGLE TAX REVIEW give publicity to his offer, and we hope that the responses will be numerous and informing. Manuscripts mailed to us will be delivered to Mr. Wenzel and his committee of readers.

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A book that has been attracting some attention from discriminating readers and creating some disturbance in ultra-conservative religious circles is "The Mind in the Making—The Relation of Intelligence to Social Reform," by James Harvey Robinson, sometime Professor of History in Columbia University. This book is, among other things, an up-to-date exposition of recent advances in psychology—so far as the functioning of thinking is concerned. The chapters on Various Kinds of Thinking are as interesting as a good novel.

The professor takes us in series through the land of Rev-erie, in which nine-tenths of us spend the greater part of our lives taking note superficially of the everyday happenings of life as they affect us individually. Once in a while we wake up or brace up to the extent of making a decision about something or "making up our mind." Gee! but that is hard to do, a bore, and gives our mind a fearful load of work. But it is a process that accompanies and indicates a big advance in the history of the race. Next we ascend to the mental division called Rationalizing, which means finding arguments in support of our cherished beliefs and for going on believing as we already do. In this satisfying process all mankind freely indulge. Last and highest of all comes Creative Thought, which is rare indeed. Creative

thought is the thought indulged in by great men, discoverers, scientists, the vanguard of civilization. Professor Robinson believes that the world today is in a parlous state and that it behooves us to stir up the possessors of creative thought so that by it they may save society. Of course being a Professor the author is in no hurry to witness the great change that he senses. His preface points out that the book is "but the beginning of the beginning now being made to raise men's thinking onto a plane which may perhaps enable them to fend off or reduce some of the dangers which lurk on every hand." You see how cautious he is. As to the actual advance in the science of economics to be found in the writings of the Georgian School, that is a subject entirely unknown apparently by this sometime Professor in Columbia University. The Remedy, which would inaugurate the reign of the Prince of Peace, is a void, a lacuna in the chapters on Thought described by our Professor. Wandering through a darkness that can be felt, yet behold now his very own creative Thought on the problem he raises. Here it is, quoted from page 222:

"There is no reason why a teacher of political economy should not describe the actual workings of the profit system of industry with its restraints on production and its dependence on the engineer, and suggest the possibility of gathering together capital from functionless absentee stockholders on the basis of the current rate of interest rather than speculative dividends. The actual conditions of the workers could be described, their present precarious state, the inordinate and wasteful prevalence of hiring and firing; the policy of the unions, and their defensive and offensive tactics. Every youngster might be given some glimmering notion that neither private property nor 'capital' is the real issue (since few question their essentiality) but rather the new problem of supplying other than traditional motives for industrial enterprise—namely, the slave-like docility and hard compulsion of the great masses of workers on the one hand and speculative profits on the other, which now dominate in our present business system." Illuminative, isn't it? As an example of creative Thought, how broad, how inspiring! Once again, O Professor, "parturient montes, nascitur ridiculus mus."

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The Conductor remembers with deep pleasure a visit he made to Oxford oh, so many years ago; and the talk now going round at the Cat and the Fiddle about the coming Conference has started his heart strings to vibrating. He visited Oxford in the heyday of his youth. "When woman smiled and all the world was young." Those were golden hours, wandering aimlessly through the gardens of Magdalen or watching the oars flash along the Isis or sauntering down the High Street, the finest thoroughfare in Europe, and turning into the Mitre Tavern, of joyful memory,

Where lines of ancient waiters chops,  
Hot, juicy steaks and dripping tarts  
Set down, as ruddy as the drops  
In their own honest hearts!

Oh, Oxford is the place for the Conference, no doubt of that. Well, all of our crowd of the Cat and the Fiddle are going over with the exception of old Michael Shea, Mrs. Livingston and Royal Andrews. We understand that Emblem is already in England, at his place in Bucks, and that he has promised to drive over to Oxford in his car and bring with him Lady Emblem and Adèle Bonnyclabber, who will be among the Emblems' guests during August. The poorer ones of our friends, Larry Wiggins and the Dowdys are going, in spite of great disadvantages and sacrifices on their part—the Professor having lately lost his position as lecturer in Q—University, notwithstanding his fine record for conformity and conservatism. Horace Wenzel, who takes an annual jaunt somewhere, has pounced on this opportunity for going over, to "size things up" in his favorite field of progressive economics. "A chiel's amang ye takin' notes, an' faith, he'll prent it!"

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There have been several fine Single Tax conferences in the past generation, beginning with the Cooper Union Conference of 1890, but, with the exception of the later gathering at Paris, there has been nothing that may be called an international affair. At the present time, however, in view of the existence of Single Tax "spheres of influence" in such widely separated localities as "the four quarters of the Earth," it is reasonable to expect a fairly broad representative assemblage of Single Taxers at Oxford in August.

To meet and hobnob with visitors from Australia, Canada, South Africa, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Spain, Andorra, Denmark, Germany, Russia, besides the gallant entertainers of England and Scotland, will indeed be a delight. The time and the place are favorable. Never were clear thinking and courageous initiative so much needed as in the world at present. This conference, we hope, will rise to the occasion. Inspired by the memory of many truly great men, whose souls were kindled with a love of the truth, and with a yearning for "association in equality" among all mankind, the men and women gathered at this conference in Oxford will point the way to a less perplexing future. May the wisdom of Moses and the spirit of Christ be with this conference—may the halls and cloisters of this ancient University be visited by long neglected worthies coming for their honors, trailing glory as they pass; the group of economists called the Physiocrats, headed by Quesnay and including Turgot, Gournay, Condorcet, Dupont de Nemours and their brethren; royalties, Joseph II and Charles IV, who were touched with a vision; and lastly the line of writers of immortal memory, Paine and Ogilvie and Spence and Dove and Henry George; and Rivadavia and Edward McGlynn and Luke North. May they all receive recognition at Oxford. And may the Land Question as the fundamental question now attract the attention of Europe and these deliberations be but the beginning of a long line of future international congresses which, based upon the Land Question, shall lead to the ultimate liberty, equality and fraternity of all mankind.