

*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

when the tenant in possession was outbid, would always be troublesome; and then there would always be a feeling of insecurity toward the end of the term. Also, leasing would require public bidding, and there would always be opportunity for spite-work.

The Single Tax does not propose to disturb any present arrangements, and those in possession of land at its adoption would retain possession. They would be required to pay into the public treasury the full annual value of the right to occupy their land which would be ascertained by general public opinion substantially as land is now assessed; so long as the holder of land paid over the full value of his advantage over others, no one would be harmed, and in order to earn such value, the land would have to be put to its best use. By allowing "titles" to remain undisturbed, ownership of improvements would be transferred by individual agreement without the need of governmental interference, and such transfer would carry with it transfer of the "possession" of land—this latter giving to the new title-owner the duty of paying the annual rental value of the land to the government. Security of possession and of improvements would be assured, and no user of land would be ousted by the "spite-bid" of some one person or group.—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

PERPETUAL EDUCATORS

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

As if in direct answer to the almost pathetic appeals for action by some of the speakers at the recent dinner given by the Manhattan Single Tax Club, a few of the forward looking Single Taxers of this city and vicinity met and resolved to aid the Single Tax workers of California in getting their amendment on the ballot at the next election.

Funds were promptly subscribed, and it was decided to send an emissary to the Pacific Coast to assist the small band of earnest workers who have drawn up a real Single Tax amendment in the work of obtaining signatures to the petition where the perpetual educators had abandoned it.

New York City.

GEORGE R. MACEY.

THE VALUE OF AN OBJECT LESSON

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

Thirty years ago, with the enthusiasm of a man in his prime, I hoped great immediate results from the inspired writings of Henry George, but with the pessimism of my present age, the progress appears to be less than it actually may be.

My disappointment is not merely with the slow progress made in Australia, but that our own feeble efforts should so far outdistance the results achieved in Henry George's own country. Knowing something of England I foresaw that in the conflict between the Peer and the Prophet, vested interest and the mostly fools of Thomas Carlyle would be the dominant factors for many an election.

The most cheering event for some years has been the exemption of improvements in New York from taxation. Such an object lesson (emphasized in your interview in the *Christian Science Monitor*) is worth a million dollars to the cause.

Sydney, Australia.

ERNEST J. HAYES.

A SINGLE TAXER, BUT—

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

I am writing to congratulate you on your Gompers article in the *REVIEW* for March-April. It is about time for criticism of Gompers such as yours.

I heard Mr. Gompers declare at Washington six or seven years ago that he was a Single Taxer and since then I have been waiting for him to show some signs of doing something for the Single Tax, but thus far he has done nothing. If there was ever a time for a man with Gompers' ability and opportunity to do his part for the Single Tax it has been during the last five years, and he has utterly failed.

Cleveland, Ohio.

E. W. DOTY.

FOLLOWING SWILL CARTS

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

Inclosed is my subscription for the *REVIEW*. This is from an old timer, back to the days of the United Labor Party. I've never let go of the Single Tax, although you might ask what have you been doing; the answer is we were all told years ago by Mr. George that we should ally ourselves with one of the large parties going in our direction. But it's not necessary to tell you that we were following a swill cart in the wrong direction. I was ON THE DEMOCRATIC CART.

But it's about time we compelled some of the large parties to have an economic programme. This land is infested with time serving politicians.

Plainfield, N. J.

DAVID MOGEY.

HAS GROWN OLD IN THE FAITH

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

I hope you will pardon me for imposing on your time to say a few words of appreciation for the *REVIEW*, and to wish it God speed in the work it is doing. The cheerful and very able articles in each issue have given me new hope and have helped to dissipate the pessimism that has taken possession of me.

I had become discouraged and disappointed. I have seen all the big and little questions fought out with nothing settled, and all these questions relegated to the scrap-heap, leaving the people of this and other countries with suspicion, fear and a growing class hatred, with the empty headed politicians at the top running the game, and the empty heads at the bottom talking revolution.

I have grown old in the faith, but have never faltered or doubted the justice and righteousness of the only reform and philosophy that are worth considering.

I want again to thank the *REVIEW* for its cheerful and optimistic outlook, and especially to congratulate you on your able article in your last issue in reply to Samuel Gompers.

Spokane, Wash.

P. J. McLEAN.

OWNS THE AIR ABOVE THE LAND TOO

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

At a recent meeting of the American Flying Club, Mr. T. Griggs, its founder, said: "As long as the aviator is at the mercy of any landowner over whose property he chances to fly, hard-headed business men will not invest capital in the development of aviation."

Mr. Griggs' point is not new. Twelve years ago Glenn Curtis flew from Albany to New York, making the first long flight and thereby winning the \$10,000 prize. That very year there was published a work of Herbert Quick's entitled "Virginia of the Air Lanes," the plot of which centered around the checking of the profits of flying by an injunction against flying over certain lands. The Single Tax idea is brought cleverly in view in Herbert Quick's story.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

HENRY G. SEAVER.

NEWS NOTES AND PERSONALS

W. A. CRONENBERGER has an article of nearly two columns in the *Cleveland Commercial* entitled "The Single Taxer's Solution." Mr. Cronenberger is an active member of the Single Tax Party of Ohio.

AGAIN we must congratulate Mr. Lewis and his able staff of assistants on the publication of another *Union Labor Bulletin* of nearly 150 pages, carefully prepared and beautifully printed. This issue contains, in addition to much interesting matter, the work complete of George L. Rusby, "Smaller Profits, Reduced Salaries and Lower Wages," a masterpiece of economic analysis. This extends over a number of pages, and the composition work alone must have cost in the neighborhood of \$125, not to speak of the value of space occupied. Our thanks to Mr. Lewis, and success to him in succeeding publications now in preparation.