

Still further to fortify the General Court's grim determination to make ability-to-pay a paying ability, it also required that a "faculty tax" be imposed on laborers, and others, according to their earnings. To differentiate between ability and faculty is a neat legalistic stunt which requires a special course in cramping the mind of the embryo juggler of words.

In 1738 this faculty tax blossomed into a tax on incomes and it was added to our wonderfully complex tax machine in 1780 when our present constitution gave to the legislature power to levy "proportional and reasonable assessments, rates and taxes," albeit the tax commissioner now charges that "many forms of taxation are not bearing the same proportion."

That which the ability-to-pay advocates lacked in the science of political economy they seemingly strove to balance by an extended exercise of compassion. Exemptions from taxation were extended to "the poor, the old, the sick and the infirm" as fast as our boasted civilization produced them. Then taxes were removed from the faculties of "ministers, grammar school masters and students of Harvard college." As to ministers, masters and students, the ability-to-pay system had again blown up under the pressure of emotion. It was not well to irritate with taxes those who dispensed recommendations for admission to heaven. Upon school masters devolved the duty of making a lasting impression of the soundness of the ability-to-pay theory upon youthful minds, and the burden of sustaining Harvard's traditions, profundity and superiority was load enough for the able-to-pay parents who viewed Harvard as next, if not equal, to heaven. Today (1933) these growing exemptions amount to "more than one billion, three hundred and fifty millions of dollars in valuation, and a greater amount in intangible personal property wealth, which cannot be tabulated."

In 1930 the assessed valuations upon land only, in Massachusetts, totaled \$2,224,828,629. This represents a per capita valuation of only \$525.00 or about one-half of what it should be. This means that Bay State industries are unjustly burdened with two and a quarter billions of dollars—which burdens filters down through the mass of humanity until it finally rests upon the weekly wages of the poor majority in the form of indirect taxation—which burden is actually borne by those having the least "ability to pay."

Today (1933) Massachusetts plumbs the depths of taxation, because the daily press reports that the commissioner of taxation has ruled that the two and a half millions of dollars now deducted from the wages of employees (to feed the unemployed) must pay an income tax!

THOMAS N. ASHTON.

REAL individualism is grossly libelled when the present economic system is labelled "individualism." Socialists who do so can not complain when their own doctrine is misrepresented.

Social Injustice

SEVERAL years ago in a Colorado town request was made of the local charity organization for a supply of coal. Investigation found a housewife evidently in comfortable circumstances, who complained indignantly that the railroad company had placed a watchman on its tracks across the street from her home and had thereby deprived her of a privilege which she had enjoyed for a long time of helping herself to coal from cars on the track.

This incident illustrates how the transfer of property without knowledge or consent of its owner, without opposition or interference and without any recompense being made therefor, may in the mind of the favored party, and by the hallowing influence of time, come to be considered a personal privilege, a vested right.

This housewife was honest as the term is generally understood, honesty based upon expediency rather than principle. She would hotly resent being classed as a common thief and would not think of helping herself at a neighbor's coal bin. That would have involved the personal equation in a disagreeable way. But the railroad coal car, on the other hand, was quite impersonal. What she took would hardly change the recorded weight of the car and in any event the loss would be infinitesimal upon the stockholders of mine, smelter or the railroad company.

In every large city, and increasingly so, it is the custom when erecting large and expensive buildings for corporations to make use of land owned by others and secured by 99 year leases. This process involves the payment of a tribute which is pure economic rent, all taxes having been paid by the owner of the building. The transfer of this value is made without the knowledge or consent of its rightful owners, without their objection or interference and without any compensation whatever being paid in return for same. In this respect the transaction is exactly the same as that which was made by the Colorado woman. Of course, there is this difference between the two illustrations, the first being a violation of common law and involving arrest for theft, conviction and punishment for same, whereas in the second case the transfer is made in accordance with legal requirements, being entirely regular in every way and without involving any moral obliquity. Here again the sanctifying influence of time is to be observed. The responsibility for the robbery, for such it really is, lies with society and not with the individual. At all times we must keep in mind the fact pointed out by Henry George that property may be secured only by one of three methods, either by earning it, by receiving it as a gift, or by robbery.

The above is only one of the many forms of special privilege which in our present system of taxation rob the many for the benefit of the few. The more common avenue by which economic rent, a community value, is conveyed into possession of individuals who have no rightful title to it, is the collection of this unearned increment by landlords from tenants everywhere, when such rent is in excess of

reasonable return on the invested capital. The economic rent in the United States is calculated to be in excess of thirteen billion dollars annually. Of course this amount varies immensely with changing financial conditions. But if this were taken for the normal expenses of government then the multitude of taxes which now fall upon capital and labor, business and industries of all kinds, might be abolished and such change would set in motion beneficent influences in every direction.

One important effect of this reform in taxation would be reduced prices of urban, residential and agricultural lands to a minimum. The inflated values of land are of advantage to one class only, that of the land speculator, the land monopolist, those who seek to benefit at the cost of others, to gather where they did not sow. The practical advantage to the farmer would be his ability to purchase desired acreage at a mere fraction of what is now the market price. The advantage to the young man who desired to establish a home would be that the land on which to build a house would cost him a mere fraction of what is now the price demanded by those who have building lots to sell. That this change would cause losses to some is, of course, apparent, but such losses would be in line with the demands of justice and would be nothing like the losses now sustained by those who are unjustly deprived of their farms and homes as the direct result of our present system of taxation.

Objection may be here made that just as unsettled obligations between debtor and creditor are outlawed after a reasonable lapse of time, therefore, and by the same reasoning, long established custom has made good the title to economic rent through the medium of 99 year leases and other contracts between landlord and tenant. It is frequently stated that if the Single Tax plan had been started in Colonial days it would have been all right, but it is now impossible to effect so radical a change in our fiscal system. This, of course, involves the question of fundamental rights and perhaps no better answer can be made to this very point than by quoting Herbert Spencer, who in his chapter on "The Right To The Use of The Earth" in *Social Statics*, states the case as follows:

"It can never be pretended that the existing titles to such property are legitimate. Should any one think so, let him look in the chronicles. Violence, fraud, the prerogative of force, the claims of superior cunning—these are the sources to which those titles may be traced. The original deeds were written with the sword, rather than with the pen: not lawyers, but soldiers, were the conveyancers: blows were current coin given in payment; and for seals, blood was used in preference to wax. Could valid claims be thus constituted? Hardly. * * * Does sale or bequest generate a right where it did not previously exist? * * * 'But time,' say some, 'is a great legalizer. Immemorial possession must be taken to constitute a legitimate claim. That which has been held from age to age as private property, and has been bought and sold as

such, must now be considered as irrevocably belonging to individuals.'" To which proposition a willing assent shall be given when its propounders can assign it a definite meaning. To do this, however, they must find satisfactory answers to such questions as, How long does it take for what was originally a wrong to grow into a right? At what rate per annum do invalid claims become valid?"

Objection may also be made that to institute the Single Tax will cause great hardship. No one understood more clearly than Mr. George that the change would involve a certain amount of hardship and he and his followers have anticipated this by providing gradual elimination of the taxes which now fall upon capital and labor, business and industry.

Henry George at all times has taken truth for authority rather than authority for truth, letting the chips fall where they may. He says in "Progress and Poverty," "Unless its foundation be laid in justice the social structure can not stand."

In Buckle's *History of Civilization* attention is called to the fact that every forward movement in legislation consists not in the enactment of anything new but in the repeal of bad laws previously enacted. The programme for the adoption of the Single Tax as given to the world by Henry George is in harmony with this.

When "Progress and Poverty" was published in 1879 a new Magna Carta was given to the world. From that time forward the principle that "ignorance of the law excuses no one," was to have a new meaning. This was thereafter to apply to economic law as well as to statutory law. Caveat emptor was given a new emphasis and a distinction was thenceforth to be made between legitimate return for labor or capital and the illegitimate transfer of economic rent to private parties. Thenceforth notice was in reality given to investors that they should beware of 99 year leases or other contracts which conveyed community values into the pockets of private individuals. Constant emphasis must be given to the great truth enunciated by Henry George that economic rent is the fruit of the community designed by a wise Creator to provide for the expenses of the community: that this fund is amply sufficient for such use: that when diverted to individuals social ills are sure to follow: and when taken by the community then all other taxes of every kind whatsoever may be abolished.

To many minds the present condition of social injustice seems to be incurable excepting by a revolution which shall include the establishment of state socialism. They would junk the entire structure, commencing all over again with a more or less artificial plan based upon expediency rather than upon justice. In contrast to this the plan of Henry George is to conserve that which is good in our present system, eliminating only that which is bad. We hold that to sacrifice all that has been gained by the experience of centuries would be a tragedy and would be as illogical as to scrap a first-class automobile simply because something was wrong with the carburetor or other vital part.

Justice, which Addison declares is the greatest and most God-like of all virtues, must in accordance with the philosophy of Henry George be the test applied to all fiscal legislation.

Coming generations will wonder how the tariff system with its monstrous injustice to all and its interference with prosperity was tolerated by this generation and the reaction will be the same toward the income tax, taking property where property can be found, with the procedure of the highwayman and with no considerations whatsoever to the principle of justice.

Too long have we held to the view inherited from across the sea that the King can do no wrong, interpreting it to mean that our Government can do no wrong. That obsession is soon to pass. The Government, with evident piety, pays hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for Chaplains to instruct our soldiers and sailors, Generals and Admirals, Senators and Representatives how to live Christian lives. These Chaplains repeat the commands, "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," "Do unto others as you would have them do to you," "Love thy neighbor as thyself," and then the Government proceeds to violate every one of these principles.

In spite of the fact that our country is capable of supporting comfortably at least ten times its present population, Prof. Sweeney, of the Iowa State College, even asserting that the population of the entire world could by intensive cultivation live on the soil of the great State of Texas, our Government has slammed its doors against immigration and as a result of bad laws is actually causing more to leave than to come into our country. The Statue of Liberty in New York harbor has in consequence become a joke.

At the present time we are telling the world to buy our automobiles, our wheat, our corn, our cotton, our radios and our other products and to pay for these with gold! "Do not presume," we say, "to sell us the products of your underpaid, degraded, pauper labor, in that way interfering with our American high standard of living!" This of course has no reference to our millions of unemployed.

The conclusion of the whole matter is that our present tax system is a jumble of economic atrocities which violate alike considerations of justice and expediency. Prosperity is as natural as sunshine and would prevail, giving to all the advantages accruing from every labor saving machinery and other fruits of an advancing civilization, were it not for the evil effects of our present stupid system of taxation. The followers of Henry George believe that the golden age will be ushered in when governments conform to the same ethical principles which universally obtain among men: When governments shall, for their necessary expenses, make full use of their only legitimate source of revenue, the rental value of land: When consequently, all other taxes shall be abolished: When land speculation and land monopoly shall cease: When all men shall enjoy an equal

right to the use of the Earth: When commerce between nations shall be free as it now is between the States of the Union: When the philosophy of Henry George shall have become a beneficent reality.

HENRY WARE ALLEN.

The Walk of Fame, Rollins College

THE presentation of a stone for the "Walk of Fame" at Rollins College, Winter Park, Fla., from the birthplace of Henry George, still standing at South Tenth Street in the heart of Philadelphia, was accompanied by appropriate ceremonies.

The letter making the appropriation came from George E. Evans, president of the Henry George Foundation, and said:

"I trust that you will honor this Foundation and the cause of economic freedom and social justice by accepting this stone and placing it among others which bear silent testimony to men and women who have rendered great service to humanity."

To which Hamilton Holt, president of Rollins College, responded as follows:

"I want to thank the Henry George Foundation of America through you for presenting this stone to us, which will be forever in the Walk of Fame. It is an honor that will never be forgotten by our faculty or students."

Walter Fairchild of this city made the presentation address. Mr. Fairchild is a son of a former president of Rollins College and until recently president of the Manhattan Single Tax Club.

Chester C. Platt spoke in part as follows:

"Henry George knew when he penned the last line of 'Progress and Poverty' that he had carved for himself a niche in the World's Temple of Fame. He wrote to his father, then eighty-one years old, and sent him a proof edition of his book. In this letter he said, 'It will ultimately be considered a great book, will be published in both hemispheres, and translated into different languages. This I know, although neither of us may ever live to see it here. But the belief that I have expressed in this book—the belief that there is yet another life for us—makes that of little moment.'"

Dr. Marion Mills Miller also gave a short talk.

"LIBERTY is not license." Certainly not and consequently it cannot be anything so licentious as denial of the equal right of all men to the use of the earth. Where there exists an economic system under which involuntary idleness of able bodied men is a possibility, there liberty is denied.

GENERAL PHIL SHERIDAN once offended sensitive Texans by saying that between Texas and hell he would choose the latter as a residence. Perhaps he meant that he would mortgage it to a bank and thus change its climate by making it a frozen asset.