

Letters to the 1931 Congress

MANY letters were received and read from friends of the cause at the Henry George Congress in Baltimore.

United States Senator Bulkley, of Ohio, wrote: "I would like to look in at the convention."

United States Senator Dill, of Washington, regretted his inability to be present.

Congressman Robert Crosser, of Cleveland, said he would probably be present.

Governor Ritchie expressed regret at not being able to attend.

From Alice Thacher Post came the following: "I regret that I am not quite up to attending so strenuous an affair away from my home city. I send most friendly greetings to the Congress and hope its deliberations will prove fruitful."

Hon. Jackson H. Ralston sent the following:

"My regret over non-attendance is the more poignant because I believe it is in the power of this conference to do much to revive the old interest in the Single Tax and to press it forward in a practical way to a greater success than it has yet achieved. As to methods I can do no better than to refer to my article in the May-June number of LAND AND FREEDOM. While there I mention some States in which, as it seems to me, prospects for speedy successful action seems brightest, this is not to exclude others in which there may be a sufficiently large band of careful workers. But study and not impulse must be our guide."

Alfred N. Chandler, of Newark, N. J., wrote:

"I am convinced that we must desist from presenting this subject as one of taxation, other than that taxation is the means to the end, and must stress the basic principle that public revenue should come from publicly created site value of land instead of from a tax levied on industry and thrift.

"If we could talk more about abolishing taxes altogether we would presently spike the widespread advocacy of various proposed taxes.

"Since slogans undoubtedly have proven effective in many causes, I venture to suggest that we adopt the slogan 'Abolish taxes. Collect ground rent.'

"This would be a new abolition movement which, if vigorously advanced, would, I believe, carry us to much quicker success than anything which we have been doing or could do. Unless we present this subject from a more fundamental basis I am of the belief that in the turnover in social conditions which is inevitable other groups will after a while pass us by and proclaim the nationalization of land and industries, and gain their point while we continue to talk Single Tax."

John Emery McLean:

"There seems to be a conspiracy of silence among the chosen representatives of these factors of our 'ship of state' with regard to the Single Tax. Like most other so-called leaders and educators of our people, they are equally afraid to approve or denounce our simple remedy for the world's present misery; for most of them *know* that our principles are irrefutable from the standpoint of logic, justice and immediate practicality.

"Not in half a century has the Single Tax movement had so fine an opportunity for aggressive action; for it has been well said that 'there is no force so great as that of an *idea* whose hour has come.'"

Hon. Edward Polak stressed the importance of organization:

"I hope the convention will adopt a settled plan by deciding to do

some concrete work and then get behind it to a man. There must be organization, and the individual must fall in line if effective results are to be obtained for the Single Tax. If the political parties, churches, fraternal organizations, etc., were to conduct their organizations the same as do Single Taxers they would not be any more successful than we are. The promiscuous firing of guns never yet did win a war. Imagine a war in which every soldier is his own general. How far would they get? That has largely been the trouble with Single Taxers—every one worked in his own way. While it is true many individuals, as such, have done good work for the cause as individuals, most of them have been shooting in the air instead of at a mark, and therefore never hit anything, except by accident. Perhaps the reason for our lack of organization is because we have no selfish motive, nothing of a material nature to offer as do other organizations, and so people do not feel bound to work together in the Single Tax cause. I hope you will stress the need of organization among Single Taxers and that they adopt a settled or definite policy and get behind it."

Hon. Charles O'Connor Hennessy wrote:

"I beg you to bring before our friends at Baltimore some picture of the unprecedented opportunity for economic education in the nationwide campaign that has opened in Great Britain, where the land question and the tax question, in their fundamental aspects, are now in the arena of public discussion. The immediate issue, of course, is *protection or free trade*, for the Conservative Party is openly demanding the adoption of a protectionist policy as a means of relieving the terrible business depression and unemployment which afflict the country. Many of the Conservative leaders are demanding a repeal of Snowden's proposals for a valuation of the land of Great Britain."

Mrs. Emily E. F. Skeel offered the following suggestion of practical importance:

"The Congress at Baltimore will, I hope, be a great success and rally many believers to the cause. Personally I doubt greatly if I attend, and certainly I should not have the effrontery to offer any remarks on the subject of our cause. Believers present would almost lose their faith, while the unconverted would flee from the wrath to come. I thank you for your courtesy in offering me the opportunity to speak, however, and in this connection may I say that I hope you will not fill your programme so full as to preclude discussion on the floor. Often it seems to me that the stray doubter or disbeliever who happens into the conference would be far more likely to stay and join if he himself could air his doubts or hear others do the same. This is my only real suggestion as to procedure."

William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., expressed himself thus felicitously:

"Like yourself, I am following as carefully as possible the tremendously dramatic sequence of events that are affecting so profoundly the thought of all students of economics and sociology. It looks as if a genuine tariff reform in the near future were well-nigh inevitable; and in due course, after pretty much everything else has been tried, politicians will come to grips with the land question. It is interesting to note, however, that in Russia the Bolsheviks have snatched away even the squatter sovereignty which they extended originally to the Russian masses. And in all the capitalistic countries the opening up of popular approaches to the sources of production would seem to be furthest from the thoughts of the political chieftains. It is entirely possible that, as result of the war demoralization, revolution will out-speed reform.

"I hope that you have a splendid meeting and succeed in dramatizing George's brilliant formula for social justice and social progress."

A. C. Campbell, who has attended other Henry George Congresses, sounded this note of hope:

"You may be sure my non-attendance is not due to any slackening of interest in the Good Cause. The fact is I give to it all my working

time. (But I must acknowledge that, being what Kipling calls 'a time-expired man,' I work at lower pressure.)

"With the present state of affairs throughout the world the followers of Henry George, it seems to me, are the most potent force for the maintenance of civilization. Such work as you are doing is therefore of the utmost importance. I heartily wish you all success. I hope the Baltimore convention will prove the most influential of the series. If such a miracle be possible, I hope it will prove the turning point and bring on a strong and rapid advance to the plenty, peace and freedom which all good men and women desire the whole world to enjoy."

And from our old friend J. F. Colbert, former member of the Louisiana State Tax Commission, we were glad to have this greeting:

"I regret to say that I find I cannot accept the invitation, but please be assured I very much appreciate it. My duties here will hold me in the State at that time and, additionally, I am not financially able to make the trip. I have found it to be true that an honest confession is really good for the soul.

"The teachings of Henry George are soon going to be more generally studied and understood. Nations, like individuals, do not reform except through necessity. The necessity for tax reform on genuine lines will come within a few years. Nothing can stay it."

J. H. Kauffman, secretary of the Ohio Single Tax Association, said: "Success to the Council of War. May it bring peace and happiness to the earth." Prof. John Dewey sent cordial greetings. A characteristic letter from Poultney Bigelow was read, and we cannot but regret his half promise to us last summer to attend was not fulfilled. A letter from Frank G. Anderson, of Jamestown, N. Y., expressed hope for the success of the Congress. Letters were also received from Otto Cullman, Newton D. Baker, Walter S. Wright, Norman Thomas, Frank W. Garrison, Peter Witt, Hon. Edward Keating and Grace Isabel Colbron.

News From Texas

THERE is always plenty of news in Texas, but most of it is like the news from every other State. Our State treasury is in the red nearly \$4,000,000, with a fair prospect of a deficit of \$6,000,000 by the end of the fiscal year. Departmental revenues have fallen off with the decline of business. Our gross receipts, occupation and sales taxes have also fallen off. On top of this we have pending an amendment to the Constitution to be voted on in November, 1932, that will exempt from State taxes all homesteads of \$3,000 of assessed value. If adopted this will reduce revenues from ad valorem taxes variously estimated from \$5,000,000 to \$8,000,000.

Our city and school districts are bonded to the limit and face this load with empty treasury and falling revenues. With this condition, not peculiar to Texas, the Single Taxer is listened to with more consideration and respect than at any time in many years. In Texas we talk taxation because it is the language that men can understand. We go on the theory, and propagate the idea, that all productive industry, whether on the farm or in the factory or in the clearing house, must unite as against the privi-

leged land owner, and it is through taxation that the remedy for this depression must be sought.

Our Legislature in its search for more revenues last spring passed a tax of 5 cents a barrel on cement manufactured in this State. Even at the low percentage of capacity produced, that industry will have to contribute some \$400,000 this year. One of the leaders in the industry told me the tax was put over because the cement people had no friends at Austin. My reply to him and to others of the industry was that they should have been making friends of all the people these past years in tax matters; that they should join and work with all wealth producers for a tax system that would encourage industry and at the same time provide ample revenue from the economic rent of land. Many industrialists see this now, but are still too cowardly to take the stand openly.

We have a Legislative Tax Survey Committee at work. I suppose every State has had them at intervals for several years. No one knows what this one in Texas will recommend, but whatever they recommend is sure to be of little weight. You can't patch up a broken-down machine such as we now have in taxation. I was invited to appear before the committee. I was preceded in the hearing by a well-informed real estate man. He expounded the law of rent as clearly as a Georgian could, but he wanted the rent for the land holder and not for the people.

In my own statement to the committee I pointed out that because of urgent needs for more revenues there was nothing for them to do except recommend more business taxes; but that the committee would be derelict if it did not propose a substitute for the whole bad tax system in the form of a programme that would gradually bring about a land-values tax only.

WILLIAM A. BLACK.

The Schalkenbach Foundation

THE Schalkenbach Foundation is doing excellent work over a wide field. Miss Antoinette Kaufmann, the foundation's secretary, and her very competent assistant are kept busy every hour of the day. From a report of the Foundation's activities just received we extract the following:

From a gentleman who answered our advertisement in *Time*:

"Some time ago I secured from you a copy of 'Significant Paragraphs.' I did not have the opportunity to read this book until today. I would like to distribute about twelve or fifteen copies. Please send one dozen of these books now."

From a minister who received a special letter addressed to a group of ministers, and enclosing in each case a copy of the pamphlet "Moses":

"I have read 'Moses,' a lecture by Henry George, with reverent interest, and I thank you for it. I would appreciate fifty additional copies for distribution to the faculty and business staff of this institute. We have some 1,800 students in our day and evening schools and I wish every one of them might read it. Enclosed please find my check for \$1 for a copy of 'Progress and Poverty.' I possess a copy of the original edition, read and carefully marked at the time of its publication, but I should like to reread it in newer form. In my student days I resided in New York, a contemporary of Henry George, and knew something of his sufferings in the cause he so fearlessly and eloquently proclaimed."