

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

TO our friend Harry C. Maguire, of this city, Norman Thomas writes as follows: "I have repeatedly stated as I believe, especially in urban areas, that the rental value of land should be appropriated by the State through a tax. I expect to go on saying it through this campaign. Do not, however, think that a tax is a sufficient remedy for the problem of housing, let alone for our other ills. It is part of a programme."

WE have no direct conflict with the Socialists. Our war is with privilege and monopoly. The Socialists are an attacking party who think they are advancing against the same enemy. This is not true, though in the realm of ideals ours may almost be said to be a common cause. Both are struggling for social justice; both are arousing the people to the need of a change. But there the likeness ends.

FOR the Socialists do not recognize the real enemy. Their vision is narrowed owing to a misconception of the real nature of society and its distributive functions. While we hail Norman Thomas as the first leader of the Socialist party who seems ready to give recognition to the old question, it is to be observed that he does not give anything like its adequate importance.

It is difficult for the man of socialistic mind to see the simplicity of the problem. Because the public collection of economic rent is a simple remedy, he instinctively distrusts its efficacy. He thinks the problem is a complex one requiring complex remedies; one or two will not suffice; there must be a dozen or more. To correct the inequality of the distribution of wealth he must have checks and counterchecks, corrections on corrections, restrictions on restrictions. He has involved himself in a perfect maze of remedial proposals.

THE mind being what it is, this is perhaps unavoidable. We recall what Henry George said to Josephine Shaw Lowell after repeated efforts to convert her: "Mrs. Lowell, it is useless. Some have the Socialist mind and others the Single Tax mind." Mr. Thomas, a man of high ideals and spirit of real devotion, has gone far. It is not likely that he will travel much further unless converted by actual demonstration. He has the Socialist mind. The simple justice the removal of which will correct other injustices

does not loom large enough in his eyes to correct his social misconceptions, his real failure of vision.

NOTE that he says that the taking of economic rent is "part of a programme," that "a tax is not a sufficient remedy for the problem of housing, let alone for our other ills." He is considering it only as a tax. Perhaps this is half his trouble. Let us ask him if, after all land is forced into use, every lot, mine, forest and farm acre is free to use, will we still have proposals for unemployment insurance, unemployment relief, etc.? If his answer be "yes," then may we not be justified in saying, he lacks vision?

HENRY GEORGE proposed a free earth. His teachings are radical; they go to the root—the real meaning of radical. It is not "part of a programme;" it is *the* programme. He proposed to leave to the natural laws of society the work of the distribution of wealth after freeing the natural resources to labor. He demonstrated that, given freedom of access to natural resources, the problem would be automatically solved. He saw that there was no difference between production and distribution in a simple state of society and production and distribution in an apparently more complex state. He was content to leave a good part of the "programme" to the natural play of social forces. With all artificial interferences removed he saw these forces as abundantly capable of solving the problem of a just distribution.

NORMAN THOMAS is not a Marxian Socialist. We think he has said so. But Socialists generally are influenced by Marx's teachings in "Das Kapital," a dreary and somewhat pedantic treatise. In the last chapter of that work Marx announces in so many words that the enslavement of labor is founded upon its divorcement from the land. This then is the solution of the question which he has involved in interminable phraseology. Had he begun with the first chapter and worked forward we might have had an earlier "Progress and Poverty." But he did not, so some of our Socialist friends, the few who have read the book in part, tire before they reach the last chapter. Marx demolished his whole structure by a momentary perception of the real truth. An honest and able man, he saw it at last when too late.

THE truth is that socialism, with its advocacy of income taxes, surtaxes, factory legislation, old-age

pensions, unemployment insurance (it is impossible for a Socialist to conceive that in a normal state of society there would be no unemployment), is purely a middle-class, bourgeois reform. This is proven by the acceptance of so many "parts of its programme" by the well-to-do among the privileged and aristocratic members of society. "We are all Socialists now," said the late Lord Salisbury. Certainly. The class he represented are for everything but a free earth; and socialism offers nothing that goes to the roots of privilege.

ITS philosophy, we repeat, touches only the surface of things. It not only fails to go far enough—it merely tinkers with the flood of evils which spring from one fundamental injustice. Its philosophy is purely a superficial one; most of its recommendations are the veriest palliatives. Here at least the philosophy of anarchism is superior to it, for anarchism does imply a natural order; it is ready to leave much to natural law; it distrusts, and rightly, most artificial restraints. If it errs in advocating the abolition of government, it is at least nearer right than those who would substitute the rigors of government for those voluntary and involuntary group activities which operate in a free society. Henry George men are not Anarchists since they recognize both the needs and functions of government. But even more emphatically they reject a system which would replace the natural order with the artificial, and leave little or nothing to those natural laws of production and distribution which, the freedom of the earth secured, operate to the fullest satisfaction and efficiency where they are unimpeded. To this from the very nature of its philosophy socialism is a denial.

Fears for Future

WE think of Europe as able to recover from any crisis. The Thirty Years' War wiped out more than half the population of the region affected, yet Central Europe survived, but on a much lower plane. Much of the older culture never returned, or was delayed for centuries, and a vigorous and promising intellectual and political liberalism was done to death. If the present problem is rightly solved, there may be a new lease of life. Otherwise, dark days are just ahead.—ARTHUR E. MORGAN, Antioch College, Ohio.

THE great growth of land values in New York City is to be accounted for by innumerable factors, but when you say "people" you have said it all. The activities of its people are responsible for the tremendous development in real-estate values. The tunnels driven under the rivers, the bridges flung across those rivers, the policemen, firemen, school-teachers, health officers, aye, and the street cleaners, all contribute to those values.—JOSEPH V. MCKEE, President of Board of Aldermen, New York City, in *Saturday Evening Post*.

Rent as a Part of Price

EVER since the appearance of Emil Jorgensen's book "The Road to Better Business and Plentiful Employment," it has been a source of confusion. This does not seem to be the fault of the book, but it is clear that the confusion is dangerous to the Georgist cause and that it has grown steadily worse and more threatening as the attacks upon the book continue.

It is imperative that this confusion be cleared away for we Georgists cannot afford to have our ranks divided unnecessarily when all our man power and all our resources are needed "at the front." Dissension in the rear is especially unfortunate at a time like this, when the world is in the throes of distress that threatens the collapse of civilization and needs more than ever the relief our Georgist programme offers.

The surest way to secure harmony in our ranks is to settle once and for all time such questions so that there may be the authority of natural law for their conduct. So long as we deal with the opinions of men we are men of many minds; but we bow submissively to the decrees of Nature. Men do not quarrel over the multiplication tables.

Let us see, then, what this controversy is about, and if we can, whether it can be settled upon the authority of science rather than by the say-so of a man.

Here, then, is what Jorgensen set out to prove:

- (1) That industry is inactive and millions of men are out of work because we have a state of underconsumption.
- (2) That a state of underconsumption exists because the average price of goods is too high.
- (3) That the average price of goods is too high because our (ground) rent is privately appropriated.
- (4) That were all taxes abolished and the rent that is paid for access to publicly provided service and betterments taken in lieu of taxes for public use, the average price of goods would fall because of the economies of improved production facilities and methods which would then go to the public, consumption would increase, industry would revive, and the jobless millions would go back to work.

In a word, he claims that the private appropriation of ground rent induces high land prices that absorb the benefit of whatever economies in production may result from invention and efficiency and thus nullifies progress, stagnates business, causes unemployment, poverty, misery, crime and despair.

In this Jorgensen is but following the lead of Henry George himself, who held that the benefits of scientific invention, labor-saving equipment and methods are absorbed in rent. (See "Progress and Poverty," page 42 to 52.)

It would seem that no one could successfully attack Jorgensen's reasoning, and that no Georgist would think of doing so, nor have any of the critics of Jorgensen attacked it.

Instead, all who have attacked the book, "The Road to Better Business and Plentiful Employment," have assumed that Jorgensen has said something different.