

# Alexander Hamilton

*The following tribute from the Henry George Club of Victoria, B. C., to its late president, Alexander Hamilton, whose death at the age of 81 occurred in September, is reprinted from the Victoria Daily Times. It was sent to THE FREEMAN by Mr. Harry H. Hollins, secretary of the Club.*

\* VERY EARLY in life Alexander Hamilton experienced something of the oppression resulting from land monopoly. His experiences and observations in landlord-ridden Scotland, where people, forced off the land, were compelled to compete in the labor markets of the cities and live in overcrowded conditions due to high rentals, had at first inclined him to accept socialist doctrines. But after leaving his native Scotland when little more than a boy and chancing to read Henry George's book, "Progress and Poverty," young Hamilton found in its teachings the only true remedy for the maldistribution of wealth and opportunity in the world, which satisfied his ideals of liberty and appealed to his intelligence. He never wavered in his uncompromising loyalty to this great humanitarian economist.

He witnessed in the United States and later in western Canada, the growth of great cities and a consequent phenomenal increase in land values. He saw these great values going into the speculators' pockets and a landlord class being built up which would demand an ever-increasing tribute from all future industry. He saw that the unequal distribution of wealth was based primarily on the possession of special privileges in the ownership of natural resources and opportunities. Give to all equal rights to the inexhaustible storehouse of nature, and freedom to exchange the products of labor, and wealth would distribute itself. Land monopoly enabled the few to restrict industry and appropriate the value of all social progress, leaving capital and labor disputing over the sharing of a strangled production while the big rob-

bery still went on increasing. This socially-created fund of land values should be taken for social purposes in place of the haphazard and confiscatory taxation of industry that fell with double weight on the backs of those who were least able to bear it.

## NEVER WAVERED

Perhaps the most outstanding trait in Alexander Hamilton's character was unwavering adherence to principles. That which was socially wrong was wrong; and between social wrong and social justice there could be no compromise.

He was an ardent free trader and a strong opponent of protection, which he considered one of the root causes of world wars. Men should not only be free to produce, but free to exchange the product with their fellows. He saw tariffs as a potent form of commercial warfare which injured the people of the countries imposing them even more than those against whom they were directed. Uneconomic industries were protected and subsidized at the expense of basic industries which it was impossible to protect, and whose export trade was killed by the increased cost of production and the scarcity of foreign exchange due to lack of imports.

## STARTED NEWSPAPER

Mr. Hamilton had no special advantages in early tuition but, being endowed with that quality of mind which

could both absorb knowledge and pass it on, he soon became active in the cause of social reform. With the help of other like-minded men, a newspaper, started in New Westminster in 1889, ran for a few years. Due to its influence in those early days of British Columbia, some advanced legislation was passed, and the city itself adopted the policy of exempting improvements from taxation. It has never departed from this policy and its wisdom is justified today by the fact that the percentage of mortgage-free homes is now greater than anywhere else, that both land and buildings are also cheaper than in any similar city and most of the vacant lots are on the outskirts.

His name was familiar to hundreds by his letters to the press calling attention to the alienation of our timber and other resources and the gross inequalities of our unjust system of taxation which penalized industry while huge publicly-earned values were going into private pockets. He frequently appeared before commissions and headed deputations in defence of public rights or in protest against encroachment upon individual liberties.

He lost no opportunity of proclaiming the great truths of Henry George's teachings and this remained to him the thing most worth doing to his last day.

Alexander Hamilton was born in Carlisle, Scotland, in 1861, and died in Victoria, August 3, 1942. Just another of nature's noblemen who tried to leave the world better than he found it, handing the torch to those who follow.