

they really knew anything about economics as a science and dared to teach what they knew they would be made to walk the plank. That would be true whether the university were publicly or privately endowed—as a general rule. In the days when the church dominated all social and governmental affairs, it was a certainty that no teachers—except such as might be made of asbestos, if there were such—ever dared to teach the truth about astronomy. That, for the reason that the church maintained certain astronomical notions which the science of astronomy has proven false. So it is in the field of economics.

I heartily concur in the suggestion of E. H. Boeck of St. Louis. It is the most effective means of calling attention to our political philosophy. The people are at present so politically disturbed, we might awaken some morning to find ourselves surprised.

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L. J. QUINBY.

### MICHIGAN'S MUDDLE

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

In the beautiful but dumb State of Michigan a steal has been perpetrated proportionately far beyond the famous Teapot Dome affair, done openly in broad daylight, its progress reported in the press and the Governor and Legislature assisting and honestly imagining in their ignorance that they were doing a meritorious act. The *Detroit News*, be it said, had a sort of inkling that the act was really unwise and even scandalous, but its protests went unheeded.

This was accomplished through the Moore bill, now (Moore law,) introduced by Senator A. L. Moore of Pontiac, a statesman who is thoroughly honest but obviously lacking other qualities essential to sound statesmanship. On the face of it this law is a measure granting a moratorium to delinquent taxpayers. All taxpayers delinquent for 1931 and preceding years may pay these delinquent taxes in ten annual installments and need not begin doing this until 1935. The effect of this measure is to help every land speculator in the State, who was about to be forced to let go, to hold on indefinitely. It deprives the State of millions of acres which it could have obtained for the delinquent taxes and could have used to end unemployment in the State.

Some of this land is within easy reach of Detroit, some is even in Detroit. The greater part of the country between Detroit and Pontiac, 30 miles away, consists of tracts fronting on some of the finest roads in the country and all held for speculation. Most of these are former farms bought by the speculators on a shoestring on longtime land contracts.

During the boom the prices obtained by these speculators for small parcels amounted to thousands of dollars per acre. But when the crash came all this stopped. Values fell below even the amount paid the original owners. Payments on the land contracts became delinquent, the owners began foreclosing, and no one who is being foreclosed upon will pay taxes for what he is doomed to lose. When the original owners finally re-possessed they found themselves loaded with obligations to pay taxes for many years back, during which the defaulting speculators had been selling at top prices, and some prices over the top. Few of the re-possessing owners could pay these accumulated taxes. It was a magnificent and rare opportunity for the State to resume possession and to offer the land to users at its true economic rent. But Michiganders like other ganders proved themselves to be the nearest thing to geese. They thought this situation to be a calamity to the State. Candidates at last fall's election of both parties promised "relief" for it. The first thing done by the newly elected Democratic Governor Comstock—the same wise guy who started the bank holidays which swept the country—was to urge an emergency measure postponing for a year all tax sales.

Of course, he did not realize that by so doing he was throwing away a chance to end the holidays which the unemployed have been enjoying in this most depressed State of the Union. Jobs, he thinks, have nothing to do with land. They are favors bestowed by those who have something on those who have nothing. So the emergency tax sale postponement measure went through the legislature by an almost unanimous vote. The Moore bill was slated to follow as quickly but

there were few members who, possibly realizing its true nature, succeeded in delaying it. Still it finally did get through and Governor Comstock promptly signed. So that is that. Michigan's unemployed may now keep living on the welfare a while longer.

During this period the Supreme Court of the State made a most undignified spectacle of itself. The tax sale postponement was unquestionably unconstitutional in that it violated some advertising contracts made by the State. The Moore bill did the same. Some disappointed publishers took the matter into court and the Supreme Court by an almost unanimous vote set the unconstitutional measure aside. This seemed to end the then pending Moore bill as well as the act directly ruled upon, and consternation reigned in the ranks of the privileged and speculator-worshippers. But it did not reign long. Senator Moore with some of his followers haled the dignified judge into a private conference. What happened there has never been printed, so perhaps we may assume that it is unfit to print. But this has been printed. The judges, still trying to look dignified, walked straight from the conference room to the bench, mounted it and announced that in rendering their decision twenty-four hours before they had entirely forgotten the depression and the hard times and so had not taken into consideration the emergency that existed, on which account they reversed their decision and upheld the measure that had been declared null and void. This is not their exact language but is near enough.

Governor Comstock is still trying to do more for the speculator and keep the unemployed on their holiday. He has pushed a sale tax measure through the legislature, but is not satisfied with it. The solons did not make it as drastic as he wished. On the whole, Michigan's experience with a Democratic Governor proves that Republican Governors could not be worse.

Detroit, Mich.

SAMUEL DANZIGER.

### WANTS TO BE A SOCIALIST

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

While reading Dr. George R. Geiger's book, "The Philosophy of Henry George," for review in *Commerce and Finance*, several weeks ago, I was struck by some very happy expressions which have been running in my mind more or less ever since, and even wandered into my weekly reviews of the business situation. Particularly admirable is his presentation of the ethical nature of Georgist philosophy and the impossibility of eliminating the ethical element from political economy without leaving it the dead and hopeless thing which has been called "the dismal science."

He represents George as seeking "the socialization of land," "the socializing of land values," "the socializing of rent," on the ground that rent is a "social product." In one passage he depicts George as seeking "the transformation of this social product from a social liability to a social asset."

Out of Dr. Geiger's book has come to me an increased repugnance for the old and inadequate nickname of "Single Tax" as a designation of the wonderful Georgist philosophy. It is a name that frequently arouses antagonism and closes the minds of those with whom our appeal should be convincing.

I have always admired the names "Socialist" and "Socialism." I have thought that "Socialist" connotes or should connote, a person who understands political economy, which the Marxian Socialists certainly do not. In this proper meaning of the word, the Georgists rather than the Marxians are the true Socialists, and it grieves me that we have in the past done so much to bring the term "Socialist" into disrepute—and I am glad we have failed.

We aim to socialize social wealth, not only that organized societies may have its own, but that individuals may be left to possess the own in security and prosperity. We are Socialists. Why deny it?

It is high time we ascended Mars Hill, as it were, and proclaimed to the nations: "Men of the world, this Socialism which the Marxians preach without understanding, this we expound unto you!"

We should, of course, distinguish ourselves from the Marxians