

THE PLAN THAT MAKES FOR FREEDOM,

The Single Tax is an effectual remedy for nearly all social, political and economic evils. There is in this purely correct, scientific, scheme of taxation no tax whatever on any man or on anything that is his, but merely an appropriation by the community of its own community-made values. This plan, when adopted, will make for the millennium; it will remove all obstructions from the path of industry, all burdens from the people, and, being absolutely the basis of all morality, it will purify and simplify government; enhance human interest and brotherly love; make men honest; stop war, trickery, lying, cheating, crime; abolish armies, navies, police courts and jails; and furnish a sound basis from which true christianity can flourish, giving opportunity for the human mind to solve the higher problems of an ideal civilization.

An unjust system of taxation is the mother of all social, political, and economic evils; a just system of taxation constitutes the basis of all virtue. Kill the mother of evil by abolishing an unjust system of taxation and you lay the axe at the root of all evil.

HENRY L. PECKHAM.

Are We Really Mistaken? Mr. Hutchins Says We Are

IN the SINGLE TAX REVIEW for January-February, under the title, "Turning Over the Iceberg," you have given expressions that I consider great fallacies. You say:

"The effort to make government more truly representative of all the people would seem destined to failure so long as the great majority of the voters take but little interest in public questions. Too much stress is laid on the machinery for recording the public will, and not enough on the vastly greater importance of educating the electorate so that it will be able intelligently to pass upon the various issues submitted to its judgment."

I find two misstatements in these sentences. As a matter of fact people do take great interest in public questions. From the lowliest to the highest one can hear remonstrances against conditions under which existence is carried on, and denunciations of the political government that does not remedy them. What I guess you may mean is that so many of the voters fail to exercise their privilege of voting, but who can blame them?

Under present ballot laws the people have no means of impressing their wills upon their representatives. To make any effective use of the ballot they have only one choice of two alternatives; they must vote the Republican or the Democratic ticket, and it is pretty well established that it makes little difference which one they choose. Occasionally an able man comes forward with a principle that appeals to the majority of the people and is elected upon that single proposition, while he may misrepresent his constituents upon every other issue.

Likewise, let a demagogue play upon the self-interest of the majority, and in glittering generalities promise to

mend conditions, he is likely to be elected only to betray those who voted for him.

How can a voter, by selecting either one of the dominant parties, express his will on Volsteadism, Armaments, Tariff, or the Single Tax? The political machine selects the candidate, solely on the grounds of his ability to serve the party, and not as representative of any fundamental policy that is approved by the majority in his community.

It requires only a few and easily effected changes in the ballot laws to enable each voter to express his opinion on all fundamental questions, which opinion will be controlled by his self-interest. But you say the "plain people" are not competent to form an intelligent opinion. This is second fallacy. The most ignorant, as well as the most intelligent, knows full well what hinders his living a free life.

Every man is compelled to subserve his own self-interest, whether that interest is dominated by selfishness or altruism; whether his interest in prohibition is dominated by his desire for self-indulgence, or his notion that it is best for the public good. Now, when a consensus of the opinions of all the people, upon fundamental public policy, can be obtained, there will be a determination of the self-interest of the majority, which is the ideal of popular government.

Democracy may be defined as: Government by the well ascertained ambitions of the majority of the population.

Intelligence, as applied to the exercise of the franchise, does not lie in book learning; in the ability to get money; in theories of economics, or any other faith or science, but in the hard facts of experience. One man's experience is as educating as another's; it is only when all experiences are summed up that there is obtained sound judgment of the laws regulating human society.

It can readily be seen that the working of self-interest and experience, will produce the best government. Take the self-interest of the robbers, whether within or without the legal restrictions. It is evident that in their many divisions, they must be a negligible influence in any expression of public opinion. Then again, no matter how corrupt, how dishonest, how unjust, any person may be, he desires, for his own self-interest that all others should be incorrupt, honest, and just, and in consequence would so express himself at the polls.

Refraining from further arguments I submit that a democracy may be attained by these few changes in our ballot laws:

- (1) Entry upon the official ballot by petition, subscribed to by a sufficient number of qualified voters to assure a short ballot, containing only those propositions that have arisen to that importance which demands a decision.
- (2) Said petitions to set forth a definite proposition in clear unmistakable language, AND THE NAMES OF THOSE SELECTED BY THE PROPONENTS TO REPRESENT THE POLICY.

Thus securing the men, or women, best able to carry the policy into effect if it should be successful in the election. That this would improve the character of

legislators is obvious, for the groups would inevitably select the most able among themselves, and individuals of large affairs would sacrifice other things to promote a cause in which they had a heart interest.

- (3) The ballots to be canvassed by propositions, and the representatives of the successful one declared elected. This will do away with all the refinements that have been foisted upon the ballot system such as primaries, proportional voting, gerrymandering, etc.
- (4) Frequent elections are required to relieve those who have been elected to represent a definite ambition, as soon as it is accomplished, and to enable the majority to correct enactments that prove in practice to be mistaken ones.

Through such a method of voting the people would govern themselves according to the experience and self-interest of the majority, securing that which was for the best good of the largest number. Selfish interests and narrow minded moralists would be powerless to impose their WILL upon the public, except to the extent that they could influence public opinion. Interest in public questions would be enormously increased through the propaganda of the several groups and organizations formed to carry into effect their opinions; these strivings would become NEWS for the papers; magazines would teem with articles, pro and con, and the number of signatures obtained upon all of the petitions would be a barometer of the state of the public mind. No one could truthfully say that it made no difference as to how he voted; on the other hand he would be stirred into activity to promote that which he conceived to be for his own best interest.

Take the case of the Single Taxer. Is it not true that there is a substratum of agreement that landlordism is an evil in economic conditions, and might we not be very much surprised, if a consensus of opinion upon the fundamental principle underlying this proposition of elimination of the ground hogs, met with a large volume of votes in its favor?

This article is already too long, but I realize that much more needs to be said to explain and illustrate the points barely touched upon, but I hope there is sufficient to banish from your mind the two fallacies referred to at the beginning.

F. LINCOLN HUTCHINS.

"THE common sense of taxation," says Irving T. Bush, "is to put taxes upon what people spend and not upon what they save." When, Mr. Bush, did you ever hear of a man not being taxed every time he spends a cent. And when did you ever hear of anybody returning for taxation anything he had saved?—*Cleveland Press*.

IN three years, 829,000 acres of English land have gone out of cultivation, and in one year government paid for transportation to send 81,520 persons out of the country. Do you see the connection?—H. M. H.

NEWS—DOMESTIC

California

THE Great Adventure League of California will continue the fight for the Single Tax. It is announced in the *Henry George Standard* that the League will make an effort to organize the voters who cast their ballots for Amendment 29 last November. The League believes that with a little money and some preliminary work it may be able to effect an organization among the 125,000 in the State who voted for the Single Tax and thus be able to finance the campaign in 1924 with funds provided by Californians.

It is stated in a newspaper received from Sacramento that \$40,000 were expended by the opponents of the Single Tax. A club woman of Los Angeles, Mrs. Bernice Johnson, testified that she personally contributed \$7,523 to defeat both the Single Tax measure and the proposal to increase the number of signatures necessary to an initiative petition, which was also defeated along with the Single Tax measure.

Colorado

MR. BARNEY HAUGHEY, of Denver, has completed his measure which will be voted upon as an amendment to the Charter on May 16. The optional feature included in the first proposal is omitted.

Mr. Haughey has had a number of "dodgers" printed and is doing what he can to educate the people pending the vote in May. The essential part of the proposed measure for which petitions are being circulated, is as follows:

Land and all interests in land including franchises in public roads, streets and alleys shall be listed, valued and assessed each year separate and apart from personal property and improvements on land; said assessments shall be made by the manager of the Department of Revenue.

Each year the Council shall fix and determine the tax rate to be levied for municipal purposes upon the assessed value of land and franchises in public ways, and shall also fix and determine the tax rate to be levied for said purposes on personal property and improvements on land. Provided, that no tax for municipal purposes shall be levied on the value of any building erected after the adoption of this amendment, if said building is used exclusively for dwelling purposes. Provided further, that for the year beginning January 1, 1924, the tax rate for municipal purposes on personal property and improvements on land shall not exceed 90 per centum of the rate levied for municipal purposes on land and franchises in public ways; and the tax rate then levied for municipal purposes on personal property and improvements on land shall be reduced 10 per centum each year until such taxes are completely abolished.

This measure is called "The Lower Rent Bill." The newspapers of Denver have as yet made no comment on the bill, but it is rumored that the Real Estate Exchange is raising money to defeat it.