

be overshadowed by silly and fantastic suggestions to catch the ears of an ignorant public and newspapers eager for sensations.

IN a friendly notice of Henry Ware Allen in the Erie, Pa., *Dispatch-Herald* the columnist of that paper, Charles B. Driscoll, pays a deserved tribute to his friend, the Sage of Wichita. But he says:

"To me it seems unimportant whether anybody is converted to such a theory, whether it be true or false or just merely workable. I do not believe that the human race can be changed in any essential way by the passage of laws. Tax laws, behavior laws or laws against murder will not touch the human soul. If my neighbor is devoted to the true, the good and the beautiful I am his friend forever, whether he believes in one tax or 20, in kings or republics, in astrology or good groceries."

COMMENT on this would be that Mr. Driscoll may select his friends, as we all do, in many cases from among those who believe in many taxes or are ignorantly indifferent to all of them. That is because they have other qualities that appeal to us. We regret their lack of intelligence on the subject, but that does not interfere with long established friendships. Of course, too, laws cannot change human nature, but they may have a great influence upon human conduct. Men may be devoted to the study of the good and beautiful but it will do them very little good if laws are such as to hold them to the level of serfs, or give them no time for the cultivation of such instincts. Laws which rob labor of its reward are vastly more to be considered in their effects than Mr. Driscoll's friendships, however important they may seem to him.

WE print in this issue the address of Chester C. Platt at Memphis because it represents a school of thought among our adherents that is numerically, as well as intellectually, not insignificant. Mr. Platt, the well known Batavia, N. Y. editor and veteran Single Taxer, is as well grounded fundamentally in Henry George's principles as any of us. We print his views without comment, leaving our readers to express themselves in their own way.

FRANCIS W. MAGUIRE, the venerable Assistant Secretary of the Henry George Foundation, attained his eighty-first birthday on Friday, January 31, and in his capacity as Secretary of the Henry George Club of Pittsburgh, was the recipient of many hearty congratulations at the luncheon meeting of the club held on that day. The principal speaker of this meeting was Attorney William N. McNair, who at the suggestion of Mr. Maguire took as his topic, "Collect the Economic Rent and Make Pittsburgh a Tax Free City." Brief tributes were paid to the splendid devotion and effective work done by Mr. Maguire throughout his long years of active service.

## Technocracy— Oh Shades of Malthus!

TECHNOCRACY! What a name and what a mouthful. And what a menace—or is it a promise? Human labor multiplied 3,000 times, 9,000 times, 9,000,000 times! Eventually, so the story goes, we may just push a button and be fed and clothed and housed and conveyed, all without human labor, served only by those slaves of iron and steel—the modern machine. Mayhap, we need not even push a button, but just wish and by some automatic thought-reading device have our every whim fully satisfied and no work to do.

Only a hundred years ago the Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus assured us that the human race must starve or die beyond a certain point because it could not produce (and never would produce) the subsistence it needed. That its power to produce food increased in an arithmetic ration (as 1, 2, 3, etc.) while human race reproduction proceeded in a geometric ratio (as 2, 4, 6, etc.) This being so, a knowledge of simple arithmetic should convince us that the race must soon outrun its ability to feed itself, and wars, disease and death must follow unless by abstinence or device we keep population down to its ability to produce. And now come great engineers speaking of production (all kinds of production) in Astronomical ratios! Surely Malthus and the engineer cannot both be right. Is it possible that both may be wrong?

Those who have not read Simeon Strunsky's article, "A Challenge to Technocracy," in the magazine section of the *New York Times*, of Sunday, January 8, are advised to do so if they want a treat. It would seem from this article that the Technocrats are human after all, and that even great engineers can err when they enter fields for which they are not fully prepared. But why spoil your treat?

We always suspected that something was wrong with this civilization. Byron Holt in a lecture at the Henry George School of Social Science recently told us that it has gone techno-crazy, and for want of a better term we accept his characterization as correctly describing its present mental condition.

We must plan, say the Technocrats—that is, *they* must plan. Mere mortals (albeit mortals comprise, among others, economists, sociologists, industrialists and statesmen) are not to be trusted. The planning is to be done by engineers. Thus is our engineering age made complete. Engineers have gotten us into the muddle, engineers must get us out.

Mechanical engineers built our machines, efficiency engineers perfected our production, industrial engineers organized our industry, and isn't it machines and productive perfection that are now producing so much food and clothing and shelter that many of us have not enough to eat and to wear or where to live and to do business?

Who, then, but engineers can lead us out of the mess we are in? Engineers alone know how it was done, and engineers alone know how it can be undone.

Do they now advise breaking up the machines and disorganizing the perfected arrangements that make possible so great a production with so little labor? Do they advise going back to some primitive state in which man-power would take the place of machine-power, a state in which labor would have an opportunity to work every day, and many hours every day? Perish the thought!

We must plan, they tell us—that is, *they* must plan. We must keep the machines and the organization, but we must plan to keep production down to the level of consumption. If people do not want food and clothing and homes and stores and lofts and automobiles and schools and high-class entertainments and trips abroad and other and various things that we know to be superfluous because we have produced all these things and still the people refuse to buy them, then we must stop making these things and turn our machinery and efforts to producing the things the people do want and in the quantities that they can afford to buy.

How this planning is to be done is a secret. We wouldn't know how to handle it if we were told. We are to turn the whole matter over to the engineers who will then go into conference, and we are to put into effect such plan as may come out of such conference. Indeed, Technocracy is to be given the power to put its plan into effect. Is Technocracy then, another name for Mussolini, or does it spell Stalin?

One per cent of the population of the United States own 59 per cent of the wealth of the country and get 59 per cent of the country's annual income; 4 per cent own 80 per cent of the wealth and get 80 per cent of the income; about 5 per cent of the population own 85 per cent of the wealth and get 85 per cent of the income. That leaves 15 per cent of the wealth and income of the country to be divided among 95 per cent of the population.

At best, then, the average of the 95 per cent of the population, who obviously produce all the wealth of the country, do not receive in return for their production more than 15 per cent of their product. \$15.00 for every \$100.00 of wealth they produce! The average person in the country, then, is a producer to the extent of \$100 and a consumer to the extent of \$15. Is it not obvious why we do not consume what we produce?

When it is also considered that this 15 per cent of the country's income includes all the large salaries and incomes in the United States, excepting only the huge incomes of the upper 5 per cent, it becomes clear why the great mass of producers are not also consumers, excepting on starvation basis. The poorest 25 per cent of the population receive (or did receive in 1929) less than 5 per cent of the country's income.

But why obtrude these facts in a discussion on Technocracy? These are not engineering facts, nor do they

argue learnedly about unit-of-energy production nor kilogram-calory consumption and, fortunately or unfortunately, they have no place in modern planning. Neither, and this quite unfortunately, have the Margin of Production or the Rent of Land any place in industrial engineering nor in modern planning, and yet the outstanding effect of labor-saving machinery, as observed in fundamental economics, is the depressing of the margin with the consequent reduction of wages, and increase of rent.

Increasing population with no place to go excepting on land already privately owned and held for speculation (investment, perhaps, would be a more polite term) sends the margin of production down, thus reducing wages and interest, and increasing land rent. Labor-saving machinery, enabling greater production with less labor has the same effect on the margin and therefore the same effect on wages, interest and rent.

Henry George in "Progress and Poverty" showed clearly that every improvement in government and transportation; every advance in the arts, in learning, in civilization; every labor-saving device that made wealth more plentiful; every saving in the expenditure of labor and capital, in a civilization where land is privately owned and held for speculation, tends to depress the margin of production, send wages down and increase the rent of land, thus enriching the few and impoverishing the many.

In view of this fact and the fact that 5 per cent of the population of the United States own all the land and all the natural resources of the country, does it require a mathematician or an economist to understand why 5 per cent of the population own 85 per cent of the wealth of the country and get 85 per cent of its total income or to know that the 5 per cent who get the 85 per cent of the wealth are the 5 per cent who own the land?

Also one need not be a "Technocrat" to know that if 95 per cent of the population have only 15 per cent of the income of the country to divide among them, 85 per cent of the product must be left unpurchased, unconsumed, "overproduced," excepting as it is *appropriated* by the 5 per cent. Mayhap Technocracy in its planning will not confine itself to engineering; mayhap it will also use a modicum of fundamental reasoning interspersed with a little common sense. But would it, then, remain Technocracy?

**N**OW, however, we are coming into collision with facts which there can be no mistaking. From all parts of the civilized world come complaints of industrial depression; of labor condemned to involuntary idleness; of capital massed and wasting; of pecuniary distress among business men; of want and suffering and anxiety among the working classes. All the dull, deadening pain, all the keen, maddening anguish, that to great masses of men are involved in the words "hard times," afflict the world today.

PROGRESS AND POVERTY.