

An English Paper Interviews Robert C. Macauley

AMONG the forty or so Americans attending this week's International Conference on the Taxation of Land Values no one is a more faithful disciple of Henry George than Mr. Robert C. Macauley, of Philadelphia, who was a Single Tax candidate in the last Presidential election in the United States. Mr. Macauley favoured the "Oxford Chronicle" one day this week with a statement concerning his own position, which may perhaps be described as that of a "whole hogger." He is quite sure that the English way of getting there by stages—if it is the English way, and he is by no means sure that it is—will not achieve very much in the matter of securing for the community the benefits which belong to it. Still less does the idea of *reculer pour mieux sauter* appeal to him.. He holds, indeed, that the method used in New Zealand—that of exempting land from increment duty on payment of capitalized value of rent charges—only aggravates the problem, since the owner is more inclined, having been freed by his payment, to hold on to his land till the price rises to suit his fancy. As to the chance of getting a little at a time, Mr. Macauley will not admit that exemption is a forward stage at all, and if it were he maintains that the landowner will fight as bitterly over five per cent. as he will over the whole, and it is not worth while to have seventeen bites at the cherry, any way. What is right is practical, and he will not go asking for halves.

MAKING THE LANDLORD'S FUTURE

Mr. Macauley gave us credit that in this country the freehold, implying the ultimate ownership of the King, as representative of the community, was nearer the ideal than the fee simple in America and in post-revolutionary France, where the fee simple makes a man absolute owner. If in the United States, for example, one man, or one group of men, held all the land the position would be clear enough. In the United States only one fifth of all the land in the country was in use at all. In New York at this moment one-third of the land was being held idle in order to create artificially high prices, and he knew of one plot, with a twenty-foot frontage and a hundred feet depth, which was sold for 32,000 dollars a front foot. If that area were papered with £10 notes the land would be worth more than the money. The man who owned the land had first gone to sleep, while the community made it valuable.

THE SINGLE TAX

The way—the only way—to deal with a situation of that kind, either in America or anywhere else, was the Single Tax, which collected for the community, the proper owners of the land. It was no use trying to "kid" the landlord that this was partly his game, Mr. Macauley declared—it was impossible to restore the loot to the looted

and let the looter have it as well. Under such an arrangement the small farmer would pay less in taxes than he paid now, and the small owner would also be better off, because he would pay nothing on his own improvements.

There were difficulties, it was suggested, such as the fact that a large part of the revenues of the University of Oxford were drawn from rents, but Mr. Macauley was ready with the rejoinder that if the people wanted a university they would pay for one, adding that they would have more to say in that case as to its availability to the people generally.

The tendency to welcome assistance from political parties he did not regard with enthusiasm. It was much more satisfactory, he thought, to get together all those who were interested, set up an executive, and go about making a party dedicated to this one idea. He would not be in the position of the land taxers in this country, depending on this and that party for help.

—Oxford Chronicle, August 17.

The Oxford Conference as One American Saw It

SINGLE TAX PARTY delegates to the International Conference at Oxford, although outnumbered five to one, achieved a signal victory by helping to make possible the foundation of a separate political party in England pledged to champion adoption of The Single Tax.

The new party will be known as the Commonwealth Land Party. It is headed by Robert L. Outhwaite, former member of Parliament, who as leader of The Commonwealth League, has during the last four years made the land question a dominant note in English politics.

Collection of the entire annual ground rent for public revenue and abolition of all taxes forms the sole plank of the new party's platform, which, it is predicted, will drive out of the political field in England, not only the rapidly declining Liberal Party, but also the Socialistically inclined Labor Party.

The magnitude of the victory of Mr. Outhwaite and his Commonwealth Leaguers, aided by the Single Tax Party delegates, is emphasized by the fact that their vigorous campaigning prevented former Premier of England Herbert H. Asquith, who had been given an official place on the programme for the purpose, from collecting the political support of the English Single Taxers for his wing of the now languishing Liberal Party. The former premier declined to address the Conference after Mr. Outhwaite announced on the floor of the convention that Mr. Asquith in a recent public utterance had declared that whatever solution might be found for existing economic problems in England, he would not go to Single Taxers for it.

Andrew MacLaren, a labor member of Parliament, who was assigned by the United Committee to fill the gap made by Mr. Asquith's withdrawal, was also later prevented

from collecting for his party the political influence of the English Single Taxers, through the adoption by the Conference of a resolution denouncing the avowed policy of the Labor Party to buy out the landlords of England for \$50,000,000,000.

Although outnumbered overwhelmingly and outvoted repeatedly, the Commonwealth League members, assisted by the Single Tax Party delegates, conducted their fight with such vigor that victory crowned their efforts and delivery of the Single Tax cause in England into the hands of scheming politicians of the Liberal and Labor parties was prevented.

The importance of the failure to hand over the weight and influence of the Single Tax movement in England to these gentry will be recognized fully in the United States by those who witnessed the decline and disintegration of the American Single Tax movement after it submerged itself in the Democratic Party about 30 years ago.

Mr. Outhwaite, whose integrity and singleness of purpose is freely admitted by all, even his opponents, is a personage of outstanding prominence and is favorably known to virtually every voter throughout the United Kingdom. His great ability coupled with a wide experience in political life, extending over a period of nearly a quarter of a century, makes him an ideal leader for the Single Tax movement in England, which it is predicted by competent political observers, is destined in a short time to be the chief contender against the powerful and reactionary Tory Party.

The Commonwealth Land Party is prepared to contest every bye election for members of Parliament and is confident that by the time of the next general election, no matter how soon it may come, the organization will be prepared to have candidates in every constituency in which there is even a slight chance of victory.

Associated with Mr. Outhwaite in the direction of the Commonwealth Land Party are M. Warriner, Dr. Richard Pearson, John E. Grant, whose recent book, "The Problems of War and Its Solution," has brought him world-wide fame; Dr. Dunston, J. McCulloch, Mrs. Richard Pearson, Mr. Owens, J. W. Graham Peace and the members of the executive committee of the Commonwealth League which automatically became the governing body of the new party.

Although the call sent out by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values was for an international conference, it was in no sense international save that it was attended by representatives from fourteen different countries. As one delegate stated it the conference was a purely English gathering with an international gallery.

Everything brought before the Conference was considered solely in the light of its bearing on English politics and no action was taken on a single question having an international bearing except the appeal sent to the various chancelleries of the world urging their rulers to

adopt the Single Tax as a solution of the economic problems confronting their several countries. In passing it might be interesting to note that this resolution demanded the collection of the full economic rent, although the United Committee refused to accept this term in its declaration of principle and policy, being satisfied with the milder demand for the taxation of land values. Incidentally it might be pointed out the extent of the demand for the taxation of land values made by the United Committee was but a penny in the pound on the capital value of the land.

Indicative of the failure of the Conference to consider the broad international phase of the Single Tax, action was taken on but four questions during the full week's Conference.

The four concrete questions on which action was taken included the resolution sent to the rulers of various countries; the resolution denouncing any and all compensation for landlords of England, a resolution expressing sympathy and regret for all Single Taxers who died recently and the resolution outlining principle and policy, which by the way was equivocal in character, failing to demand collection of the full economic rent as was done in the resolution sent to the rulers of the nations of the world.

Although the declaration of principle and policy was inaccurate in its economic statements, the United Committee refused to correct it or amend it in any way. The attitude of the United Committee on this resolution is fully voiced by its secretary, John Paul, who in the debate on it declared "That not any change would be tolerated, not a comma would be taken out."

But one other question was brought before the Conference for action—a resolution declaring the Conference looked with disfavor on members of the Single Tax movement engaging in speculation in land—and it was promptly tabled by the United Committee, which controlled an overwhelming majority of the delegates present.

In the debate on the resolution, preceding the tabling of it, one member of the Conference became furious, lost his usual calm demeanor and springing to his feet and with his hands clinched above his head and his eyes blazing, shouted "I am a land gambler. It is the easiest way to make a living."

Although it was pointed out by one of the delegates that it seemed of doubtful propriety that land gamblers should be permitted to have seats in a Single Tax Conference—its aim being to destroy the selling value of land by governmental collection of its economic rent,—the well oiled machinery of the United Committee's "steam roller" was hastily put into operation and the resolution which demanded moral action from Single Taxers in harmony with their philosophy was quickly tabled.

Were it not that the Conference brought about the formation of the Commonwealth Land Party, it might be regrettable that the United Committee invited so many persons to travel thousands of miles to give a satisfactory background to English political intriguing. —ROBERT C. MACAULEY.