

Alas, before long I had cause to regret my assumption of office. This time it was not a counter-revolutionary movement that caused me to bring down my iron fist—it was the cloud of biting, poisonous gnats which attacked me asleep and awake, the aforesaid propagandists, each one of whom wanted to run his proboscis into my flesh and with his tiny sword make my life unendurable. I often have wondered why this was so. One would suppose that a certain *esprit de corps* must naturally exist among the propagandists of a cause, urging all to eschew bickering and at least in public, to present a united front. Not so with these my opponents. They advertised our differences and gloried in our divergencies. I grew at length weary of the difficulties they were putting in my path of duty, and my professional engagements became so retarded by the lost hours I was forced to devote to them that self-protection pointed out to me a way of making short work of their continued interference. You who will have the privilege of reading the Second Part of the Story of My Dictatorship will know the rest.

## The New Movement In Britain

AS the issue discussed in the SINGLE TAX REVIEW regarding the presentation of the philosophy of Henry George is one that has arisen in Britain some facts in relation thereto may be of interest. It is a matter which concerns Single Taxers the world over.

Early in 1919 a group of Single Taxers formerly associated with the Liberal Party met to consider the new conditions that the war had created. They decided that the prevailing "prosperity" would soon give way to calamitous industrial conditions and that a futile physical revolution could then only be averted by the application in full of the principles enunciated by Henry George. That the hope of the realization of economic liberty lay in the Labor movement, which term may be taken to signify in this country the striving of the workers to secure just conditions. That it would be futile in the times that lay ahead to urge Justice and Liberty in terms of taxation, and that the presentation of the case must be fundamental and its method of realization be presented in the simplest terms. To achieve these objects the Commonwealth League was founded to demand from Parliament:

(1) A Declaration of Common Right to the Land on the precedent of the Declaration of Rights of 1689 which implemented by the Bill of Rights established the supremacy of Parliament as against the Crown.

(2) A Finance Bill to implement the Declaration by calling upon each holder of the Common property to pay its economic rent to a Common Land Rent Fund as a tenant of the Common estate.

(3) Provision to be made for the allocation of the Common Land Rent Fund to the local authorities per head of the population served by each.

It will be seen that by this simple demand the complexities of taxation have been avoided. As also the irrelevance of calling a rent a "tax," which has prejudiced the cause in the eyes of those who fail to see why the landowner should be singled out for taxation in preference to the immediate enemy, the "Capitalist." Furthermore it gets rid of controversy associated with a land tax as to the possibility of its being "passed on."

Finally, and most important of all, it lessens the danger of a manifest and fatal departure from principle that a tax provokes. All direct taxation carries with it an exemption. In Australia and New Zealand exemptions in the land taxes have reduced the cause initiated by Henry George as one for human emancipation to one for the "breaking up of big estates." The result had been that the taxation of land values has proved to be the most potent method ever devised for the extension of land ownership and the consolidation of the power of reactionary forces. This has been particularly the case in New Zealand where the Henry George movement first found practical realization and where the method of partial application has proved disastrous.

As regards the demand for the allocation of the Land Rent Fund to the municipalities per head of population served, two great principles are involved. To place in the hands of the State a vast and growing fund would enhance the power of the State and of its attendant bureaucracy. The allocation of the rent fund to the Municipalities would place it under direct popular control and with the power which they already possess enable them to satisfy the communal needs of the people and inaugurate conditions of civic life which are now but numbered amongst the dreams of visionaries. And by this method of collection and allocation the principle that economic rent is created by all alike is realized. This cannot be attained by the rating of land values which would result in an unequal participation in favor of the resident of the great city as against the country dweller.

The method proposed by the League would secure the regeneration of the countryside in which lies the solution of the wage problem and of Poverty. The State would then be left to tax the rewards of labor for the carrying on of anti-social ventures such as war and Imperialistic exploits and as such would come to be regarded as the enemy of democracy. The transference of the administration of social services such as Education, Poor Relief, Maintenance of Asylums and so forth to the Municipalities by Parliament has relieved the taxpayer at the expense of the ratepayer, with the result that the local authorities have largely been reduced to a bankrupt condition.

For instance, in Sheffield, the great engineering centre, unemployment has reached such tragic proportions that one-fifth of the population are in receipt of doles. The rates total 22 shillings on the pound of rent paid by the occupier for land and buildings and of this sum over 10 shillings in the pound is raised for poor relief. So we have

this grotesque state of affairs, that the working man pays on a cottage rated at £15 a year 6 shillings a week in rates of which 3 shillings goes to poor relief of which he is perchance a recipient. It will therefore be seen that the forthright and uncompromising demand of the League is related to urgent and distressing problems that cry aloud for immediate solution.

When the Commonwealth League was founded the taxation of land values had been brought to the political gutter by the fiasco associated with the Liberal Government. Indeed the late Coalition Government with the assent of Mr. Lloyd George scrapped the State valuation that had been initiated and which he had sponsored, and returned to the landlords the amount already paid under the trumpery taxes of the Budget of 1909. The founders of the League contended that they were setting out as pioneers and that the landtaxers who clung to the Liberal Party and to old methods of advocacy need have no fear, for they would reap where the League had sowed. That by demanding a full measure of justice the politicians would hasten to proclaim themselves to be in favor of the taxation of land values. And so it has been. The General Election that has just been held has fully justified the League's political forecast. The Labor Party with 143 members now sits as the opposition in the House of Commons. The Commonwealth League thus started under most adverse circumstances but immediately met with a full measure of encouragement. The propaganda was so swiftly accepted that within little more than a year the Annual Conference of the Labor Party at Scarborough carried unanimously a resolution under the head of Municipal Finance which demanded the appropriation of the economic rent of the "National Property," the land and its allocation, to the Municipalities "on the basis of population and relevant considerations."

Since then the "Scarborough resolution" has been unanimously endorsed by district Labor Conferences and at some 500 meetings convened by the League.

At the recent General Election the League questioned the candidates of the Labor Party as to whether they were prepared to support the Scarborough resolution and received 200 affirmative replies and two in the negative. Of those who replied some 70 were returned, and as they include the most active members of the Party considerable advance has been made. A gratifying and significant feature of the affirmative responses is that they came mainly from Socialists who were wont to scoff at the taxing and rating of land values.

But the League does not propose to let the matter stand at that. A Conservative Government is in office and we have to endeavor to ensure that at the next General Election the assertion of the Common Right to the land shall be the main issue. So the League now proposes to revert right back to first principles and to appeal to the people past the politicians. It will raise the issue of the Equal Right to Life and consequentially that of the Equal Right to the

Earth. It has drafted the Declaration of Common Right to the Land on these lines and will direct its propaganda to a demand for it to be brought before Parliament. So at last we are getting back to first principles and nothing but the lack of funds prevents their adequate presentation to the people and their securing a measure of support that would assure realization at no distant date.

It has to be realized that in this propaganda the members of the Commonwealth League are not actuated by the enthusiasm of the "impossibilist." What before the war would have been merely a propagandist effort now accords with the terrible needs of the times and is the only solution of a desperate situation. The disruption of trade in Britain, a nation of which only 10% are engaged in agriculture, means that millions have become superfluous and starve upon "doles." The workers as a whole have been reduced to starvation level and to conditions of acknowledged slavery. To talk to such men of redemption through a penny tax or to try to meet the oncoming of revolution by offering justice and liberty by small instalments, is a policy of futility. The Commonwealth League may fail, for the time is short and its means inadequate, but its failure will inevitably be signalized by events that will stagger the world. Yesterday the march of 20,000 unemployed and starving men on to the prohibited area around Parliament House was sidetracked by leaders fearful of the consequences when they came face to face with the forces arrayed against them by the authorities. So today, but if tomorrow the hapless be also the hopeless, rule will be established by way of the machine gun, and cruelty born of fear will demand a military despotism. Thus it is that the League is striving to turn the tide of hunger-provoked despair into the broad channels of liberty.

We may fail just as in France the first Single Taxers failed to avert revolution. But at least we feel that our efforts should be known to all, who knowing, would accord a measure of sympathetic interest. For the issue that is coming up for determination is the acceptance by the industrial masses of British of the Socialism through Freedom of Henry George, or the Socialism through coercion of Karl Marx. And the result of that decision will determine the future, not only of Britain, but also of the world.

R. L. OUTHWAITE.

It begins to be asked on many sides how the possessors of the land became possessed of it more than you or I.

—RUSKIN, *Fors Clavigera*.

THE greatest "burthen on land is the landlords."—JOHN STUART MILL, "Elements of Political Economy," Book II, chap. 2, sec. 6.

LANDLORDS are perhaps the only great body of men whose interest is diametrically opposed to the interest of the nation.—H. T. BUCKLE.