

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.

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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