

The Single Tax Review

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Current Comment

A VALUED correspondent takes us to task for our assertion that the Single Tax is opposed to prohibition. We know several Single Taxers who are Prohibitionists. But the philosophy of the Single Tax is nevertheless opposed to restrictions of this nature. Perhaps it will be desirable to add a word in illustration of our contention.

There may be those, who, looking at the Single Tax as a mere fiscal procedure, will wonder what taxation has to do with prohibition, but the Single Tax is not a method of taxation but a great economic philosophy.

Single Taxers are against taxation because it restricts, and they reject all theories of benevolence with which certain restrictions by taxation are justified. And "by the same token" they reject all theories of restriction, and all practices in support of restriction, however fortified by theories of benevolence that in any way seek to prevent the working out of the natural law of freedom.

Prohibition on prohibition—traveling with great velocity from one point to another, the tendency is to lay all human freedom under ban. It is worse than the license that proceeds from the absence of all law, for this exhausts itself by its very violence. Government restriction travels with the power of a juggernaut, silent, crushing, and gaining with every revolution of the machinery set in motion by the remorseless power of the State. The people grow used to infractions of liberty when they are gradual and insidious. Angry protests die away in faint and timid appeals. The soul of man shrinks before the government's assertive insolence, and the brutality of officialdom grows with every new infraction permitted to the executives, great or petty, of the imperial will.

THE Single Tax gets rid, not only of a multitude of burdensome imposts, but a world of artificialities, a status of industrial slavery, and the thousand deadening customs of thought and conduct. It puts every man on his feet; reads to him the charter of his birthright in the earth and sends him forth for the first time a really free man. It makes effective, for the first time in human history, the *sacredness of property*; nothing then that man owns that is the product of human labor but is his as against the world. Think of the scales that will fall from his eyes when he realizes that the curious legal fiction of ownership in the planet by virtue of transfer and sale to individuals has disappeared into the limbo of malignant superstitions—that all the bounteous earth is the property of those who dwell upon it—the living generations!

Civilization will then move on to grander heights. Its

first great era has ended; the civilization of the artificial order has ceased to be; the civilization of the natural order has begun.

How pitiful it is that we should have fallen into the habit of talking of this great change in terms of taxation!

THE *Atlantic Monthly* for April contains the following advertisement: "An Indestructible Security — 650,000,000 tons of coal. Located in a prosperous, growing community. Served by the main line of a big trunk railroad. Mined with the most modern machinery. Operated by an experienced and successful organization. Definitely valuable by reason of natural advantage. Paying five cents for every ton removed, to protect the bondholders' investment of half a cent a ton." And there is more of it. Note now that what is being sold is not the coal, for the 650,000,000 tons are not above ground. Therefore it is all land. Whose land? This potential coal, with the stored sunlight of thousands of years, legally belongs to the Pennsylvania coal barons; morally it is the property of the human race.

WE want to take this opportunity, while we think of it, to issue a much needed challenge to every reform paper now seeking public favor. This challenge includes the *Nation* and the *New Republic*. It must also include the *Freeman*, with which we frankly confess something of a disappointment.

The challenge is that they carry in some prominent part of the paper, in every issue and in double leaded type, what they consider the five or six (or less) fundamental principles needed for the reconstruction of society. This should state clearly their attitude on these problems, and the direction in which the responsible conductors of these periodicals are impelled, if they have not yet reached a position where they can definitely announce their convictions.

These six fundamental principles might be grouped somewhat as follows: 1. Land and its treatment. 2. The Tariff and its justification. 3. State and municipal utilities—how administered. 4. Labor unions and reasons for their origin. 5. Man's relation to the State, and the distinction between public and private functions, how drawn. 6. Liberty—and in what it consists.

We are not especially enamoured of this list, nor of the order in which the issues are placed. Doubtless a better one can be suggested, and the cleverness of Messrs. Lippman and Croly, of the *New Republic*, Neilson and Nock, of the *Freeman*, and Villard, of the *Nation*, will, we believe, be equal to the task. We are speaking in the interest of

the subscribers to these papers who may prefer to be instructed rather than merely amused. Some of them, we do not doubt, have become tired of being fed on rhetoric, and conducted on pleasant but not very profitable excursions into the realms of art and æsthetics.

Readers may weary in time of the somewhat cavilling criticism of statesmen and their blunders. They may begin to ask themselves if these blunders are not for the want of some guiding principle of political conduct fortified by the economic knowledge which would have enabled them to avoid these pitfalls, of which knowledge the editors seem to possess a monopoly, but the origin and nature of which they obstinately refuse to divulge. They rarely suggest how they would have acted under similar circumstances, and readers may begin to ask if they are really as wise as they pretend. Faith in the editorial prescience destroyed, they may even lose their present keenness of relish for the writings of those infernally clever persons who cover so much white paper in these so-called radical publications.

A Few Words With Representative Sisson

HON. THOMAS UPTON SISSON is a Democratic representative from Mississippi. Here is part of a speech recently delivered in the House:

"Now, gentlemen of the committee, I believe that as Republicans and Democrats, we may carry this Government rapidly, radically into a socialistic trend, and do it unwittingly. Every time the Government of the United States or a State government goes into a line of endeavor, thereby adding to its payroll to become a charge against the taxpayers, unless it is performing a proper function of government, something that ought to be performed by the government rather than by private individuals, then to that extent you have socialized the Republic. I do not believe, for example, in the government ownership of railroads. The government ownership of railroads is the first long step toward socialism. When you say I believe in the government ownership of railroads, then it becomes necessary, follows as the night the day, that you also have the control of those instrumentalities necessary to operate the railroads. You cannot operate the railroads unless you own or control the coal mines; and if you own the coal mines then you must have all the instrumentalities necessary to operate them. Where will it end? In my judgment our government was intended only, as conceived by our fathers, to give to every man in this Republic a fair, equal opportunity to develop himself in accordance with those powers which God has given him. If he is energetic, if he is wise, if he is thrifty, if he is economical, he will succeed. If he is unwise, if he is thriftless, if he is extravagant, he will not succeed. So that government which rewards endeavor makes the best citizenship on earth, but that government which taxes endeavor for the purpose of rewarding people who do not make any endeavor is a government of special privilege and will not live long in the minds and hearts of a people that can and will make a nation great."

These be brave words. But experience proves that a

man may speak the language without an accurate knowledge of what the words stand for. George Pitt Rivers, in a recent work entitled, "Conscience and Fanaticism," says: "Symbolotry is a common trait of humanity and few men analyze the symbols they worship. . . . The power of words and symbols is entirely independent of their real meaning." To the degree, we may add, that language is a symbol one may use it and still be in ignorance of what it is symbolic of.

The Declaration of Independence is one of the revered documents of the history of our fight for independence. It is the object of much lip service to this day. But may we not challenge every devotee of its sublime utterance: "Illustrate by example."

Patrick Henry said, "Give me Liberty or give me death!" It would not have been necessary to challenge the great Virginian with the words, "Illustrate by example." What he was doing, placing his head in a noose by his bold declaration against King George, was example enough. He did not need to explain.

Congressman Sisson is not in the same position. Therefore, our challenge, "Illustrate by example." He is against government ownership of railroads. So far he is explicit and definite. He is opposed to a government of special privilege. Very well. How would he take away the special privilege given to railroads in the ownership of valuable roadbeds, terminal sites, etc.? It is conceivable that he may have a plan to reconcile private ownership of railroads with the abolition of special privilege. Many Single Taxers do not believe in government ownership of railroads, but then being against special privilege, as Congressman Sisson is, they have a plan.

"A fair, equal opportunity to develop himself in accordance with those powers which God has given him," says Mr. Sisson. Very good, Congressman. But illustrate by example. Single Taxers have a plan to give every man that "fair, equal opportunity." This is less a plan than conformity to the natural law. It is not government ownership and it is not socialization. Assuming that Congressman Sisson is sincere in the use of words his place is with us. But are these words merely "tinkling cymbals?"—we had almost written "tinkling symbols," which words so often are.

British Ex-Service Men Want The Land

HOW far we are behind Great Britain is indicated in the proposals made in Congress to raise the needed revenues for the soldiers' bonus as compared with the suggestion of the National Union of Ex-Service Men in England. Congress can think of nothing save an additional income tax upon excessive profits as far back as 1917. This suggestion for a retroactive tax, stands in startling contrast to this declaration of the English ex-service men in a recent manifesto:

"Ex-service men call upon the nation to fulfill its finan-