

The Single Tax Review

VOL. XX

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1920

No. 5

Current Comment

THE Single Tax Party placed in nomination at Chicago a presidential ticket. The candidates of the party are Robert C. Macauley, of Pennsylvania, and R. C. Barnum, of Ohio. Single Taxers who believe that the principle of the land for the people takes precedence of all other questions—and what Single Taxer does not?—can have no conceivable reason for voting any other ticket in those States where it is possible to cast their ballots for Macauley and Barnum. The States where Single Tax presidential electors will appear on the ballot are as follows: Maine, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. A great deal of hard work was necessary to get on the ballot in these States, and for this the Party's organizers, James A. Robinson and Jerome C. Reis, working with the local Single Taxers, deserve much credit.

THE great bulk of Single Taxers in these States, will, we have no doubt, vote the Single Tax ticket. They will find it impossible to justify themselves in adopting any other course. If there were other questions which they might persuade themselves were of any real importance, sophistry might justify a contrary course, though it would have to be a very subtle kind of sophistry. For to the Single Taxer who would do this there would be an uneasy knocking at the door of his conscience. Election day is a momentous day to the man who holds a political conviction as a religious principle, and what Single Taxer does not? When the door of the voting booth closes upon him he is face to face with the gravest responsibility. He is in the presence of the Holiest of Holies—and we say this in reverent apprehension of all that we hold of profoundest import. What can be more sacred than the duty he has now to perform—that of signing, as a member of the Commonwealth, in the solemn sanctuary of the polling booth, his declaration of faith in the principle on which depends the security of mankind, the rescue of toiling millions, the happiness of little children?

IT is not conceivable that a doubt should arise at this time, and at such an impressive juncture, between the Single Tax voter and his conscience. How least of all at this time!—now, when the little that is of value in civilization, won by the struggles of heroic martyrs, seems slipping from us, when the pillars of the house are shaken by a thousand ominous upheavals, when all men distrust the stability of things, and all property rights tremble in the balance. The world is full of futile and sordid revolutions

that can accomplish nothing and result in nothing but confusion and the despotisms of temporary majorities, swinging now one way and now the other, and paving the way for some modern Cæsar to override all liberty in a carnival of despotism.

WHAT shall the voter do at this time? Above all what shall the Single Taxer do? Can he hesitate for an instant? The Land Question must be brought into politics. Neither of the two old parties show any disposition to do so. A continuing vote for the Single Tax will make it an issue, *the* issue. Nothing will do it but a direct vote for the Single Tax. We can educate all we may, even continuing to add to our numbers, but this will not count until there be a political register of the converts we make. Men must speak through the ballot; only then is their voice really potent for the change of institutions. All other methods are uncertain, incalculable and dubious. All other methods ask us to wait for a more propitious season to do—what? To speak through the ballot, of course. For is not this the ultimate and avowed end of all our educational propaganda? Are forty years not enough to wait and work for the time to begin to work in the only way that is possible to achieve our ends?

ELIHU ROOT in an address in London presenting the Saint-Gaudens statue of Lincoln as a gift from the American to the British people, spoke of "those conceptions of liberty and justice which have been the formative power that has brought all America, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, to order its life according to the course of common law, to assert its popular sovereignty through representative government—Britain's gift to the political science of the world—and to establish the relations of individual citizenship to the State on the basis of the inalienable rights which governments are established to secure."

THIS is well said. But what profits it if these words, kept to the ear, are broken to the hope? What are "the inalienable rights which governments are established to secure?" Our Declaration of Independence declares that among the inalienable rights are "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Is the enjoyment of these rights possible where a few own the earth? Do not these owners then control the right of liberty and the pursuit of happiness by others? Is not the very right of life of the landless in their hands were they disposed to exercise it? If men can live only on land and from land, would not a notice of eviction, could it be enforced, be tantamount to a sentence of death? Accepting unreservedly the unrestricted power

of private ownership of the planet, does not the right to life or death of the multitude rest in the hands of those who own the earth?

WHY do the Great Ideals seem destined to become the Illusions? We have gone through a period of stress such as the world has never known. In the compulsion of that stress, in the peril of the world's great necessity, a dream was born. The world should be made "safe for democracy." Out of the welter of death and blood and misery should arise a new civilization. It was "a war to end war." "The parliament of man, the federation of the world," seemed on the point of being realized.

PRESIDENT WILSON was the spokesman of this dream, and when the clouds of partisanship have faded away, and his own errors of judgment (and they were many) are forgotten, history will not grudge him a place among the prophets of a better time. Twenty millions of the world's noblest and best are dust on a hundred battlefields, twenty millions more are maimed and crippled. Many men and women have been animated by the high thought of a great turning point in the history of civilization. The dream made them stern for battle and enabled them to face death with a calm indifference. Then the war came to an end, and with it the Dream. The hope of the world lay in fragments. The war instead of ending war seemed to many to plant the seeds of other and greater wars. The League of Nations looked to some like an attempt on the part of the victors to strengthen their imperialistic claims. It matters little whether this was actually true or not; the fact that it was so regarded was sufficient. Suspicion was in the air. Charges and counter-charges were bandied back and forth. Labor, realizing its own immense political power, looks upon the whole thing with ill-disguised indifference. And so the dream dies; the Great Federation must wait.

NEEED we wonder that this Great Ideal has turned out to be the Great Illusion? The opening of the war was itself the death of another great ideal. For years we had considered this age of ours the humanitarian era. We had looked upon the time as marking the end of war, the era of good feeling among nations. Never before in the history of the world had the energies of men been so effectively directed to the amelioration of human suffering. Never before had social ideals and pleas of social reform interested so many persons. The teachings of philanthropic socialism, of State aid to the needy, of relief to the poor, the unfortunate and distressed, became an important part of the people's education. Organized charity extended its benefactions to the darkest corners; help to the unfortunate was preached as a duty in pulpit and in the popular magazines. The world was growing in kindness and helpful ministrations.

SUDDENLY the Dream was broken. The tramp of the gray legions into Belgium at the command of the

German military power broke the spell. And in the welter of blood that followed in those four dreadful years another Great Ideal had become a Great Illusion.

WHAT is the matter with the world? Why must the Great Ideals become the Great Illusions? The answer is simpler than the so-called wise, the statesmen momentarily elevated to high positions, can reveal to us. The troubles of the world are not political, they are economic. Men are not free; they are pawns upon the chessboard of their masters, the slaves of the ignorant and designing; the creatures and playthings of politicians. They are the victims of their own delusions regarding their dependence upon the State, upon government, upon politicians, upon capital, upon employers, upon landowners. They are the lords of the earth, but accept the servile badge of dependents. The earth belongs of right to them; they have allowed it to be apportioned out to the few, and hence the predicament in which they find themselves. Living by production they obey the commands of their military masters to destroy their associates in production; living by co-operation with other peoples, they accept the malevolent doctrine that they can live better by going to war with them. Existing by trade, they nevertheless consent to the erection of barriers that make trade more difficult, and defend it by a curious system of teaching which is called National Political Economy.

They have consented to the greatest of all barriers that fence them off from the use of the earth, so that other barriers more or less do not greatly matter to them; and because their condition is one of slavery, the teaching that they are dependent upon governmental devices comes with great plausibility. It serves well the policies of so-called statesmen, who can marshal them for the purposes of conquest, military or political, and for schemes of domestic aggression, or pure buncombe. This is the explanation of the apparent indifference of political leaders to the intelligence of those they are supposed to "serve."

THE Great Ideal of a world made "safe for democracy" died because the defects in human society and economic institutions were deliberately ignored. Man is not economically free; political readjustments therefore must rest upon an unsound economic superstructure, in which they bend to every wind that blows. To ignore this is to ignore the most potent fact in human relations; to attempt to rebuild political institutions, while ignoring the economic blunders of the past which demand immediate rectification, is to build upon quicksands.

TO ABOLISH SLUMS: Stop taxing buildings, improvements. Tenement owners can then afford to erect better buildings. Tax building sites, used or unused. Then owners cannot afford not to erect better buildings.

TO DEVELOP MANUFACTURES: Stop taxing buildings, machinery, raw materials and products. Tax factory sites, used or unused.