

The Single Tax Review

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Current Comment

WE print in this issue a contribution to the REVIEW from R. L. Outhwaite, Secretary of the Commonwealth League, and member of the House of Commons from 1912 to 1918. To this article we invite our readers' attention. There is much in it that should be of interest to American Single Taxers, especially the attempt to get away from a too exclusive consideration of the taxation side of our movement, and the measure of success attained by the new method of propagating our truths through the medium of the British Labor Party.

MR. OUTHWAITE is mistaken, however, in assuming that the problem is the same as confronts us in the United States. What we are trying to do here is to get the movement back where Henry George left it, as the doctrine of the restoration of man's equal right to the use of the earth, and to remove, so far as possible, the undue emphasis laid on the taxation features of the movement. Taxation is the method of its accomplishment and we have no quarrel with it. Our quarrel is with those who would stop there. To talk Single Tax as a method of exempting certain products of labor, and not to indicate the goal and the great purpose of the movement, however gradual its fiscal approach, is to emasculate the great doctrine of industrial emancipation. To keep it in the background while advocating the Single Tax as a tax reform measure is to gain friends in certain quarters, but it is to lose sight of the truth that men have equal rights to land and that the earth and the rent of the earth are the common property of the born and unborn.

JOHN PAUL and his admirable and well named *Land and Liberty* have preached the doctrine consistently. If there have been differences these have been political, and not essential differences of principle, so far as we are able to see. We have yet to read any article from Messrs. Paul, Verinder, Madsen, Lester, or any of the splendid group of militant Georgists in Great Britain, in which the doctrine of our great preceptor that land is the birthright of mankind is minimized in the slightest degree. On the political differences that have arisen between our friends in Great Britain no Single Taxer here will presume to take sides. For the REVIEW to do so would be an act of presumption. It has done all that can be expected of it when it presents Mr. Outhwaite's side and the arguments of those who have chosen to work with the Labor Party, like Mr. Outhwaite, Col. Wedgwood and others.

WITH special reference to the movement on this side of the water it is necessary to reiterate what the REVIEW has so often said in words which have not fallen wholly upon heedless ears. The aim of the Single Tax movement is a free earth. Its modus operandi is through the taxing machinery—immediately, if it can be done, gradually if it must—to abolish all existing forms of taxation and to take the entire rent of land for public purposes. The aim must never be concealed by those upon whom has fallen the duty to preach the message of Henry George. It is not a tax measure, and is not advanced as a solution of our taxation troubles, though incidentally it will solve these, too. It has little relation to any tax facts. Its purpose is to establish equality of access to land. Hard as this doctrine is to many, it is the only thing that is really worth while in the message left us by Henry George. The expression of this truth is not "emotionalism," as it has been fatuously called—it is hard, stern, serious fact. It is not to be changed by current formulations of our doctrine before Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, nor is the course of this great social reform in history to be altered one iota from the direction in which it travels by those once recognized as leaders and on whom it was thought the mantle of the Prophet had fallen.

SAMUEL GOMPERS and ex-Secretary of War Baker, now president of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, have had a controversy on the Open and Closed Shop. Mr. Baker is for the Open Shop. The letters exchanged between the gentlemen occupy an entire page of the *Cleveland Plaindealer*. The controversy is interesting as revealing the shiftness of Mr. Gompers and the failure of Mr. Baker to say the things he knows. Here are two men, both of whom prefer to indulge in wordy colloquies rather than to lift the veil that hides the real elements of the controversy. If Mr. Gompers is foxy, as he is often accused of being, the ex-Secretary cannot himself escape inclusion among the *genus vulpes*.

THE earth is the only Closed Shop about which it is necessary to make talk. To open it would be to relieve Mr. Gompers of the arduous duties that he performs, with a not inconsiderable salaried emolument, as head of the A. F. of L. For labor unions exist because there are men out of work bidding for employment—the unnatural auction of the labor market. With all natural opportunities open to labor, and all men employed, labor unions would exist only as harmless fraternal orders. Mr. Baker is right when he characterizes the relation of labor unions and employers as a state of strife. It is really civil war.

The shiftiness of Mr. Gompers consists in evading the conclusion that the closed shop can be maintained only by force in time of strike, and that in the ultimate analysis, with non-union workers taking the place of strikers, the unions can succeed only by violence and intimidation. It is to these abhorrent forces that underneath his suavity Mr. Gompers really appeals. Mr. Baker indicates this politely. But he fails to remind Mr. Gompers of what both know perfectly well—and that is *his* cardinal sin.

THE promoters of the International Conference on the Taxation of Land Values to be held in Oxford, August 13th to 20th, announce that a representative gathering seems likely. Those who intend going from here are requested to get in touch at once with the United Committee, 11 Tothill street, London, England.

EDITORIALS

Apologies to an Editor

IN a recent issue of the REVIEW we expressed the opinion that the former editor of *Colliers'*, Mr. Harford Powel, Jr., had in an editorial paragraph in which he suggests that industrial and business depressions were due to the conditions of human glands, reached the depths of editorial drool and inanity. It is only fair to Mr. Powel to say that the editorials of his successor, dealing with *Colliers'* plan for industrial peace and progress, exhibit a colossal ignorance that puts even the "gland" suggestion in the high class of a *New York Times* editorial substitute for thought. We are informed that these profound observations on social and economic conditions are the result of collective study and careful consideration by some of the best minds of 416 West 13th street. This seems probable, as it is altogether unlikely that one editor could be capable of evolving the mixture of stupidity and ignorance displayed in *Colliers'* programme for solving the labor problem and establishing permanent prosperity.

Spread the Light

THE real Single Taxer, one who is doing something to advance the principle in which he or she believes, has always a field of activity in which there is unlimited opportunity. The one great channel for the dissemination of important truths is today to be found in the newspapers and magazines. It is from them that the hundred million Americans get their news of what is being done, and, alas! it is from them that too many readers take their opinions and beliefs.

It has been apparent for some years past that there is a concerted action by the principal newspapers, including even those professing democratic or liberal principles, to suppress as far as possible all mention of the Single Tax.

Socialism, something far off that a lot of people want and hope they won't get, may be discussed. But a practical proposition such as the Single Tax is dangerous to the privileged interests, that through advertising and financial control are an effective censorship, so it must not be mentioned in the news or editorial columns. There remains, however, the "Letters to the Editor" department of most newspapers and many magazines. Here is a field for every Single Tax worker.

Joseph Pulitzer used to say that no editorial writer was worth his salt who did not get boiling mad at least once a day over some record of injustice in the daily news. When you read something about unemployed workers, idle land sold at a huge profit; tax burdens so great that they grievously oppress the consumers—anything that will serve as a text—sit down and write a short letter about it. Be good tempered. Don't abuse the editor because he doesn't advocate the Single Tax. He will, just as soon as his constituency shows that it favors it. Then it will be a question of his readers or his advertising, and the readers will win, as advertisers don't spend money on a paper that is not read. One letter a day is not much. Think of what it would mean if all Single Taxers should write even one letter a week. You don't need an association for this work—only a pen or pencil and a 2-cent stamp. This means you—not somebody that you are going to get to help you. Get busy.

Thoughts on Taxation From a Profound Thinker

WE have on numerous occasions referred to the ignorance and stupidity of the professional economists in dealing with the subject of taxation, and have at times wondered whether the amazing nonsense put forward as a serious contribution to the stock of knowledge on this question was due to lack of ability to reason, or a cowardly deference to the privileged interests that profit by a continuance of existing tax systems. It has long been apparent that no light or leading was to be expected from the professors of economics in Universities and Colleges sustained for the most part by the beneficiaries of privilege, for even though they should catch a glimmer of truth as to the natural law of taxation, they would not be allowed to teach their classes something regarded as dangerous radicalism.

Fortunately the United States is not dependent upon its economists and statesmen for advice regarding taxation. Under the free and democratic conditions prevalent in this country any man who can successfully manage a factory, a department store, a stock-jobbing "banking house," or any other enterprise out of which he makes a fortune, becomes at once an authority on all public issues, and is qualified to advise his less fortunate fellow citizens as to their rights and duties. Thus we have Mr. Otto H. Kahn, who becomes adviser to Congress on all matters pertaining to taxation and finance, and Mr. A. B. See, an estimable maker