

# The Single Tax Review

VOL. XXIII

JANUARY—FEBRUARY 1923

No. 1

## 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.