

# At the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle

CONDUCTED BY E. WYR

SEVERAL eminent Single Taxers took part in the recent Symposium on different phases of the taxation question as outlined by the National Economic League. Their opinions appear to have interested the editor of *The Index*, one of the monthly reviews issued by our big banks and trust companies. Louis F. Post, Assistant Secretary of Labor, 1913-21, is quoted by *The Index* for August, as saying: "Income taxes are in greater or less degree confiscatory; and the confiscation of private property, so long at least as public property is diverted to private use, is morally indefensible." In reply to the query, "Do you favor a tax on individual incomes from services as a source of Federal revenue?" Professor Lewis J. Johnson, of Harvard, wrote, "An income from service is proof that the individual has already served society. Why make him pay to the common fund in proportion as he has done so?" Another question in the symposium was, "If individual incomes are taxed, should those from property be taxed at a higher rate than those from personal services?" James R. Brown, President of the Manhattan Single Tax Club, in explaining his affirmative vote wrote, "Yes, on the assumption that personal service is less able to bear taxation." But Joseph Dana Miller, editor of *LAND AND FREEDOM*, and Louis F. Post voted in the negative. In Mr. Miller's opinion, "Property in things produced by human labor is as sacred as income from personal services, and should not be taxed." And Mr. Post finely wrote, "All confiscation should be according to ability to bear it."

We wonder what is accomplished by these Symposiums, so far as the advancement of the Georgian doctrines is concerned? There appear to have been about twenty participants in this Symposium, of whom perhaps four or five understood the Single Tax. Is not life just a little too short to waste in company of this sort, where the getting down to the root of things is farthest from the thought of the managers? Pleasant association, of course; and a compliment to have one's opinion solicited. But not for a moment should one expect any real impression to be made or any appreciable result to be attained. The public is not listening to the proceedings of these symposia, and the distinguished participants deliver their dicta and take their cup of tea together, as gentlemen should do. To try to go farther seems like a useless waste of effort. What Professor F. W. Taussig, Professor of Political Economy at Harvard, wrote in reply to one of the questions might be extended to cover the whole situation as these savants see it—"The present arrangement is not ideal, but in its general lines it may as well be left as it is." So there you are.

Another Harvard don, Professor also of Political Economy and author of many books on economic subjects "The Distribution of Wealth," "The Conservation of Human Resources," "The Principles of Political Economy," and "Elementary Economics," Fellow of the Royal Economic Society of England and member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has come forward at this time of stress and doubt and poured his professional oil upon the troubled waters. The *Outlook* during the current year has contained a series of articles from his favoring pen. The following extracts will give a sufficiently clear outline of Professor Thomas Nixon Carver's discoveries.

"The fact is," says he, "that the United States is one country that has a very definite and practicable, and at the same time a very beautiful ideal before it—an ideal that is vastly finer, more just, more righteous and withal more easily attainable than anything of which any Socialist ever dreamed. In the pursuit of this ideal we are actually in this country achieving an economic revolution which, in the most literal possible sense, is the exact realization of the rule, 'He that would be great among you, let him be your servant.' Not only that, but we are actually working out in this country at the present time the only economic revolution in the world—at least the only one that amounts to a hill of beans. Moreover, this revolution is being brought about without any help whatsoever from the professional reformers or the preachers of purely emotional righteousness. It is being brought about by the school-ma'ams and the business men primarily, though everybody who does really good and honest work in any field of useful endeavor and who thinks clearly and votes sanely has his part in it."

We think that this mention of our fellow citizens who "think clearly and vote sanely" is something of a damper to our expectations—but nevertheless we proceed, scarcely able to contain ourselves for curiosity. The Professor expounds: "We are approaching equality of prosperity more rapidly than most people realize. What is equally important, we are working out this diffusion of prosperity for all classes without surrendering the principle of liberty which is embodied in modern democratic institutions. \* \* \* The amazing material prosperity that is coming to this country through the pursuit of the noble ideal of equality under liberty, and our failure to develop the arts of leisure, are deceiving many superficial observers into believing that our ideals are themselves materialistic. But this prosperity is coming to us precisely because our ideals are not materialistic. All these things are being added unto us precisely because we are seeking the King-

dom of God and his righteousness, as they are always added and must of logical necessity be added unto any nation that seeks whole-heartedly those ideals of justice that are the very essence of the Kingdom of God."

Our curiosity is on the way to be more than satisfied. The Professor seems to have about him an odor of sanctity combined with the pleasing accomplishments of a Stock Exchange "bull" writer and the hortatory insistence of a Florida or Cape Cod real estate boomer. We hope *passim* that the coming equality of prosperity will not overlook the editorial office of LAND AND FREEDOM, and be kind to all our old friends at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle.

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So important have these papers in *The Outlook* seemed to their author that he has collected them into a book, just published, entitled "The Present Economic Revolution in the United States." The title is important, if true, but we must admit that we start by being skeptical. Great discoveries generally produce more noise than this one has done. According to the Professor, "even Bertrand Russell has overlooked it." Well, it appears to the Professor that at last we are deviating into sense. We are harking back to our early American ideals, stamping our foot and vowing we will be free—and equal. Equal in what? Does the Professor point to equality of opportunity as the ideal? Ah no, how could he? Does he mean a Socialistic equality of income? Oh no, why should he? He means "occupational equality," which being interpreted signifies that the manual trades will soon become about as prosperous as the learned professions. The much maligned workingman finds in Professor Carver not an apologist but a lyric, almost an ecstatic, admirer and boomer. In his eyes the workingman is coming, if he has not already come, into his own. He is a capitalist, a stock-holder, a bond-holder, a banker. Owing to the exclusion of the riff-raff of Europe through the present immigration laws he is rapidly becoming a genuine hundred per cent. American, and his children will soon hold their heads high like the F. F. V's. The old distinctions and the old strife between capital and labor are rapidly disappearing and a beautiful *entente cordiale* is taking its place. Behold, we are entering upon an economic Utopia, the like of which has never been even dreamt of before!

As we started out by saying, Professor Carver is a Professor of Political Economy at Harvard, and as "research" is considered the touchstone of learning and science at all our Universities we must presume that at certain stages of the Professor's "researches" he has come upon that elusively perfumed nigger in the economic woodpile known as the landowner, the franchise grabber, the monopolist of natural resources, that truly aristocratic offspring of our American progress and culture. Since the Professor, we understand, is intensely interested in the fine arts, we can hardly see how he has denied himself a more intimate

acquaintance with those who practise the fine art of getting something for nothing. What we would suggest for the Professor is an intensive review of his chosen subject, after the manner of those of his students who, having flunked in their examination, are given another chance to make up their deficiency before being awarded a diploma.

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Speaking of Florida and Cape Cod leads us to observe that "research" into the progress of the current land-booms, not only in these two localities but in countless other sections of the country, may prepare investors for "that dreadful day" when the boom shall burst and profits fade away. But Miss Bonnyclabber will find difficulty in getting up any enthusiasm for that kind of "research." The psychology of the "mob" is at present highly optimistic, and figuratively speaking, "investors" do not wish to be disturbed in their devotions to their God, Mammon. Professor Richet of Paris, who has recently written a book, might have saved himself the trouble, so far as we Americans are concerned. He says that man is not "homo sapiens" but "homo stultissimus." His savage book revealing, however, no knowledge of "homo Americanus," what good is it anyway? If Professor Richet were here at this time, say as an "exchange professor" at Harvard or Yale, we feel convinced he would order his ill-considered volume removed from the press, wishing to revise for a new edition his generalisations of the human race. In this happy land he would find that God *is* in His Heaven and all's well with the World.

Be that as it may, we should like to conduct the French Professor to Florida or to Cape Cod or to Rockaway Beach and point out to him the lacuna or vacuum that is so evident in his great argument. Also we should be pleased to get a ticket for him to the gallery of the N. Y. Stock Exchange, from whence might be pointed out to him all the stock wonders of the world as they "soar" ten points between quotations. The Professor says that in his country people are considering the advisability of getting themselves wiped off the face of the earth in order that a new race may try the experiment all over again. Did you ever hear such pessimistic nonsense? As we say, let him come over "in our midst" and we'll bet dollars to doughnuts that he'll change his tune.

We do not guarantee the length of time that our "hands all round" prosperity will continue. It may be for years, but we scarcely think that it may be forever. Our advice to the Professor is to get that University appointment without a great delay. Henry George wrote that when a pyramid is standing, so to speak, on its apex, the equilibrium is likely to be unstable. What we decidedly wish to avoid is greeting the Professor at the dock after the market has collapsed and the land boom is busted. The whole purpose we have in view would then be shattered and we should be put to so many explanations and excuses that our health would give way in the process.

We were talking the other night at the Sign of the Cat and the Fiddle about the signification of laughter. Sometimes even there we get away from the "eternal verities," as Dr. McGlynn used to call them, and drift into such sub-lunary topics as dress, the theatre or the size of the crops. Somebody asked if any one present had ever read Prof. Bergson's entertaining book on Laughter? We replied that we had enjoyed the book, but that we could not see the validity of the argument made by the distinguished philosopher to establish the origin and nature of laughter. And then all hands took a turn in the discussion and it became evident that we each knew something at least about the problem.

One man remembered that Hobbes had held the field for three centuries with his shrewd discovery that we love to think ourselves superior to our fellow men,—especially when we are gathered together in crowds we look down, as from a gallery of the gods, upon those who are attempting to do things, while we heartlessly laugh at their mistakes. The laughter of Hobbes is a cruel laughter and surely must be lacking in universal approval and acceptance. Another man spoke about Darwin's explanations and said he couldn't see much in them, possibly because he found Darwin too technical to follow. We ourselves said that it was while we were reading Prof. Bergson's amusing book a thought struck us that the application to this problem of Henry George's dictum that "all men seek the satisfaction of their desires with the least exertion" might well serve as the solvent to clear the matter up. Bergson claims that what produces laughter is a certain mechanical rigidity in objects and movements, the reaction being a shock or surprise to our natural desire for an easy flowing rythmical continuity—and he cites a jumping jack as an illustration. But, as we said above, we never could see much in this.

According to Henry George's dictum we naturally conserve our physical powers and exercise plain common sense in our ordinary activities. For example, we invariably choose a short cut rather than the long way round, and if we didn't we should be called fools, and an audience of any kind would laugh in concert at our stupidity. There appears then under George's dictum to be a natural way of doing things, which is the common sense, efficient way, without a needless loss of energy. If we use more exertion in the attainment of our desires than the normal amount familiar to the ordinary observer, the latter laughs at us for our foolish waste of time and effort. On the other hand, if we attempt to get results without expending a sufficient quantity of effort to do so we get laughed at for our inefficiency.

A workman is commonly expected to operate in a "workman-like manner." To be sure, from age to age the criterions by which we judge what is normal and efficient change in character, and hence we find that what used to cause laughter at one time may not cause it now. The

deviation from the normal in dwarfs, hump-backs or even in the insane used in Shakespere's time to stir the laughter of the groundlings. In our more sophisticated day we take our laughter more seriously (as we suppose), although we are all children at heart and we gladly pay our money to split our sides over Charley Chapman or some other equally funny comic man.

This matter of laughter is probably of vast use and importance in the make up of our sociological commonwealth. Normally, we should all be associated in equality. Nature has supplied an unfailing mechanism for the reclamation of waifs and strays into that "modus in rebus" which makes for the happiness and comfort of the human race. Laughter, ironic or good-natured, contemptuous or Rabelaisian, is the strong tonic medicine administered by society to keep the individual within the bounds of propriety. For after all, society being an organism, its machinery must not be destroyed nor its operations upset by the unfit throwing monkey-wrenches among the wheels. Laughter serves to "give the hook" to weaklings and boasters, thereby leaving the stage clear for your downright good players.

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As bearing upon the cause of twentieth century wars the following remarks by our old friend Mike Shea are quite to the point. "I see in the papers," said he, "that there's another shindy starting up in a place in the desert of Sahara called Mosool, or is it Moosol? There are very able Turks and Arabians and Drusians in the neighborhood, good fighting men, and they'll give the British the worst mandamus they have had in some time." "The English hold a mandate over a country called Irak," we observed. "Perhaps you are referring to that." "Well," continued the old man, "likely I am. But it's a crying shame that after all the punishment the British taxpayers have endured since the World's War they still give their statesmen *a la carte blanche* to soak them still more. And what is this rumpus all about? 'Tis about oil. Pretty nearly every country in the world is represented there by a favorite oil company, each company, do you mind, seeking to bring glory upon the national colors of its dear native land at home. For instance, they tell me that in friendly rivalry and a spirit of brotherly love the Standard Oil Company and the Royal Dutch Shell Company and a great French Company and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company sit round a table and parcel out among themselves the oil fields of value. England having the mandamus or mandate, it is up to her to bully the Mosoolians wid a big stick. Along comes Turkey and causes a flutter in the barnyard. For Turkey has uses for oil herself, and moreover the Mosoolian country being more or less Turkish, why should the oil be siphoned off to foreign parts? But the great companies with their paper concessions stand by England and they all together give the lie to Turkey, and pretty soon Turkish and British troops (fine young fellows under

thirty) go to slaughtering each other, while the four oil companies keep watch and tab, ready like harpies to swoop down after the war is over and sink their claws in the polluted fields. Nothing but an international game of grab! Hivens, how much longer will the taxpayers of the world stand for it?"

## Henry George Corroborated

HENRY GEORGE, in *Progress and Poverty*, by a process of deductive reasoning reached the conclusion, that in a country where there is an increase in population and material advancement, there is a constant tendency for the ratio of the product that goes to the payment of rent to *increase*; while there is a constant tendency for the ratio of the product that goes to the payment of wages to decrease.

In the year 1890 Carroll D. Wright was Director of the Census Bureau, and he made an attempt to estimate the amount of wealth which on an average was produced by a day's labor in the mills and factories of the Eastern States, and the amount that was paid in wages for this production. His estimates were, that a day's labor produced from eight to ten dollars worth of wealth, and that the wages paid were from two dollars to two and one-half dollars per day, about one fourth of the product going to the payment of wages. Taking the country as a whole, no doubt somewhat more than one fourth of the value of the total product was paid in wages, for wages were generally higher in the West than in the East. On account of the use that was made of this information in certain quarters, succeeding census reports contained no statistics of this kind.

Last year a government bureau estimated the amount of wealth produced in the country during the year at sixty billions of dollars, and the amount paid in wages was estimated at ten billion dollars. A financial institution made similar estimates which agreed closely with those made by the bureau. According to these estimates, since 1890 the amount paid in wages has decreased from one fourth or more to one sixth of the total product. The same conclusion can be reached by comparing rent and wages in new and sparsely populated regions with older communities.

With this tendency working with all the constancy of the force of gravity, how can the future of the country be viewed with complacency? With the evidence from induction corroborating so well the argument from deduction, can the professors of Political Economy still deny the validity of the "Laws of Rent and Wages" as formulated by Henry George?

—W. A. WARREN.

NOTICE: We are still in need of lists of prospects for circularizing and sampling. Send them in!

## Impressions of an American Journalist In England and Germany

"THERE are more ways than one to skin a cat." This phrase has been used more or less since the days of Noah, when many thought there would not be much of a shower. The Commonwealth Land Party in England is carrying on an educational campaign for the reform advocated by Henry George, which is both extensive and intensive. When I wrote my article for the July-August Number of LAND AND FREEDOM I had not had the pleasure of meeting J. W. Graham Peace and W. C. Owen, leaders in the Commonwealth Party movement. While those connected with the "United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values" might perhaps be appropriately called bit-by-bit reformers, inclined to the balance-of-power-reward-your-friends-and-punish-your-enemies technique, the Commonwealth Land Party might be called Direct Actionists.

The United Committee seeks to get pledges from members of parliament and candidates for members of parliament for the land reform planks of their platform, but the Commonwealth Land Party has little or no faith that members of any of the present political parties can be depended upon to do much to further the cause of land reform.

The programme of Direct Action advocated by the Commonwealth Party is so simple that the wayfaring man, no matter how thick-headed, can understand it. The party demands, "*that on an appointed date the Crown, as trustee for the people, shall collect for the people the economic rent of the land.*"

Mr. Peace says that his party carefully avoids saying anything about "the taxation of land values," or "Single Tax." When a reform calculated to give to those who are doing the world's work the full product of their labor, is presented in the guise of a Tax Reform movement, it repels many and confuses others. While the simple doctrine that all mankind have an equal right to the use of the earth, and that government as a trustee for the people should exact from those who use the earth and its resources a sum equivalent to their value, is something that can be understood by all.

The Commonwealth Land Party since its organization six years ago, has held 1500 public meetings, at which its doctrines have been set forth. At Tower Hall, near London Tower, every Tuesday at noon it holds an open-air meeting, often attended by five or six hundred persons, and at Finsbury Park every Sunday both in the morning and evening it holds meetings. Its speakers have been heard in every part of the United Kingdom. It publishes a weekly paper, edited by Mr. Peace. Copies of it go to America. In New York Miss Corinne Carpenter, George