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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The associate editor has more than a bushel of letters claiming his attention. Practically all of them are worthy of publication, but it is a physical impossibility to publish half of them even in the near future without cutting them down. This of itself is no child's play. Be as patient as you can. The Independent has no intention to slight any of its readers, and everybody from the editor-in-chief to the office boy is working his "best hicks" to make the paper better every week. By the way, how would it be for you to send for a book of recruiting coupons? It costs you nothing to try—and every recruit added now is that much gained for the battle in 1904.

Dr. M. J. Gahan of Omaha is said to have invented an artificial coal, which can be retailed at about \$5 per ton, of greater heating capacity than Pennsylvania anthracite.

The American Standard of Frankfort, Ind. is a democratic newspaper of the right color. It is wide awake and aggressive in its fight against the plutocratic democrats.

Gen. James B. Weaver of Iowa is being boomed for democratic nominee for governor of that state. He was the populist candidate for president in 1892.

Clarence H. Venner of Boston has begun suit to break up the Rock Island railroad's reorganization scheme started last summer. The Rock Island management say it is simply a "hold-up" suit.

Several republican state legislatures are passing some laws demanded in populist platforms, and resolving that United States senators should be elected by the people. No set of political principles ever had such a wonderful growth in the same length of time as those proclaimed at the Omaha convention.

It seems that an income tax is constitutional in the territory of Hawaii, but not in the United States. The United States court of appeals in San Francisco has sustained the Hawaiian law and in doing so says: "It places the burden of taxation upon the points of strongest resistance, where it is easiest borne." That is pretty good pop doctrine.

The trusts have pushed prices of material up to such an exorbitant point that many of the railroads have ordered work on extensions and betterments stopped, among them the Milwaukee & Alton. The trusts, like the railroads, can take all the traffic will bear, but they can't take any more. There is an inflexible law of counterbalance in the economic world. If prices rise, wages must rise. When wages and prices both rise the cost of improvements is so great that it means bankruptcy to go on with them.

RAILROAD COURTS

Of all the curses that ever settled down on this country the curse of corporation and plutocratic courts is the worst. For years an agitation was carried on to compel the railroads to adopt air brakes and automatic couplers. The movement had the sympathy and support of the whole population except those interested in the railroad business, and after years of work such a law was passed. Now the United States court of appeals steps in and nullifies the law by a decision, the argument sustaining it being so flimsy that it will excite the disgust of any man who reads it. The courts have held "that it is not necessary to equip locomotives or tenders with automatic couplers, because the law does not so specifically provide. That a car is not in interstate traffic unless actually in transit in an interstate journey, loaded with interstate commerce, or being actually moved or handled in preparation of an interstate movement. In other words, a car having made an interstate journey is not in interstate traffic while being switched unless such switching is in actually preparing an interstate train. That the law does not require that cars shall be equipped with couplers which will couple automatically with those in use on another road. It is only necessary that cars shall be equipped with automatic couplers which will couple automatically with their own kind of couplers."

This decision practically nullifies the whole law which was the thing aimed at when it was written out. Congress could, of course, in passing the law, deal only with interstate commerce, and it is straining the construction of the law beyond all reason to hold that congress intended that each railroad company engaged in interstate commerce could have an automatic coupler of its own which would not couple with the cars of any other road.

Our railroad courts are a by-word all over Europe. They are a disgrace to civilization.

Such a law as the one just nullified by the United States courts is demanded by every impulse of humanity. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1901, there were 2,675 railway employes killed and 41,142 wounded. That equals the killed and wounded in many of the greatest battles of the civil war. These heartless railroad courts intend that such slaughter shall continue, if by it the railroads can save a few hundred thousand dollars by refusing to put automatic couplers and air brakes on their trains.

ETHICS AND TAXATION

The single tax philosophy, if The Independent rightly grasps it, is based on two fundamental propositions:

(a) All men have an equal (but not a joint or common) right to the use of land (that is, the earth, including air, light, etc.); and that this right is only limited, as to any individual, by the similar rights of others. From this is deduced the conclusion that equity, morality or ethics does not permit property in land.

(b) By reason of this equal right to the use of the earth, limited, of course, by the similar rights of others, each is entitled to the absolute, exclusive, individual ownership and dominion over those things produced by applying his labor-power or energy to the land, either directly (as in agriculture and mining) or indirectly (as in manufacturing and other lines).

"To what sort of things," asks Henry George in "A Perplexed Philosopher," "does such a right of ownership rightfully attach? Clearly to things produced by labor, and to no other." (p. 248.)

"Organized society," he continues on page 251, "must have revenues; but the natural and proper and adequate source of those revenues is not in what justly belongs to individuals,

but in what justly belongs to society—the value which attaches to land with the growth of society. Let the state take that, and there will be no need for it to violate the right of property by taking what justly belongs to the individual. . . . The truth is that customs taxes, and improvement taxes, and INCOME taxes, and taxes on business and occupation and on legacies and successions, are morally and economically no better than highway robbery or burglary. . . . There is no necessity for them. The seeming necessity arises only from the failure of the state to take its own natural and adequate source of revenue." (p. 283.)

No matter upon what the levy of taxes be assessed, whether upon land values or upon property, the taxes themselves must be paid by a transfer from the individual to the state of things produced by man. It may be that land values are a better subject for taxation—but land values themselves pay no taxes. Men do the paying—and pay out of their incomes.

The "robbery" Mr. George speaks of is inevitable no matter how the levy is calculated, because each must surrender for the use of government some of the things he has produced or received in exchange for his productions. How the calculation is to be made may be fair or unfair, accordingly as it makes each pay his due proportion or allows some to escape wholly or partially who ought to pay more; but neither land nor land values of themselves can be "taken" and used as taxes.

Taking "the value which attaches to land with the growth of society," Mr. Louis F. Post of The Public (Chicago) explains is merely an "elliptical" expression. What is meant is that the occupier of land will cheerfully give the taxgatherer products or property equal in value to the economic rent of the land. Society produced the land value upon which is calculated the economic rent—and proposes to take for its own use what it produced; which being impossible, society compromises by taking as taxes the very things which the Georgian philosophy declares cannot be taken without committing robbery or burglary.

Suppose some calamity befalls the occupier of land and he is unable to deliver to society the equivalent he has promised. Can he be ousted in favor of some person who can pay? Suppose he refuses to pay. Can his goods and chattels be levied upon and taken? Suppose he ignores the "elliptical" expressions and relies on interpreting words and sentences literally. "I am aware that this land value is \$50 per square foot and that society produced it," he might say; "well, let society take it. That is not my affair. This house is my property—it cannot be taken without "robbing" or "burglarizing" me, and society wouldn't do that. I shall stay right here. I shall not give up any of my income to the tax-gatherer." What would society do?

It may be that a tax on land values would be more nearly equitable than anything we have tried—but the philosophy has too many ellipses for the average man to understand. Without reading into it much that isn't there, there would be no revenues at all.

When the bill of that scoundrel Elkins is closely examined, it will be seen that it does nothing more than eliminate the imprisonment penalty in the law as it now exists. That is the way the republicans propose to suppress the trusts.

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A QUEER PERFORMANCE

One of the queerest sights ever seen on this or any other continent was beheld in Omaha last week. In a great public meeting at which the leading citizens of the city took part, the hands and feet of the men these citizens had elected to the legislature were kissed, and such men as Kountze, Yates and Kirkpatrick crawled in the dust on their very stomachs before them, in pitiful pleas that the members of the legislature would vote for a bill providing for the taxation of railroad property at the same rate that other property is taxed. If these men had voted for the fusion, instead of the railroad candidates, there would have been no necessity for such a performance. The fusion candidates would have voted for such a bill without the asking. Why did not these men vote for the fusion candidates? Can any man give a reason? Why do such men go to the polls and vote for candidates they know are nominated and supported by the railroads, and then after election get down and lick the dust from the boots of the men whom they have elected, making piteous appeals not to compel them to pay the taxes which the railroads ought to pay? Can any man tell why? Why do these heavy taxpayers prefer a railroad, republican government that largely increases the cost of state government and constantly adds to the amount of public debt upon which interest must be paid, to one that decreased the cost of government and reduced the state debt?

The only reason that The Independent can think of, and that is not a "reason," but rather a prejudice, is that that class of men have a fear of the common people. They think that if the common people get control of the government and hold it, that they will pass unreasonable laws and deal unjustly with owners of large amounts of property. They have no facts to sustain such a belief. Whenever the common people have obtained control of government they have always dealt justly with all.

TEDDY TOO-CREDULOUS

The Associated press asserts that the dispatch about the Rockefeller telegrams was submitted to the authorities at the White house before it was sent out. Teddy doubtless believed that those telegrams had been sent. When Attorney General Knox can fool him so completely as he has done about the trust legislation, it is no wonder that he got fooled by this fake. When Knox told him a year or two ago that there must be a constitutional amendment before anything could be done to suppress the trusts, Teddy believed it and began advocating such an amendment. When Knox told him that there was no tariff on kerosene oil or anthracite coal, Teddy believed that and so announced in his Cincinnati speech. When Knox told him that this Elkins bill and the publicity measure would knock the trusts out, he believed that. Teddy is altogether too credulous. All his life he has associated with respectable and honorable men and takes that crowd at Washington to be of that class and believes all that they tell him.

INDIRECTION

There are earmarks which indicate that President Roosevelt and nine of the United States senators have been attempting to play what can be aptly characterized as nothing short of "a schoolboy trick." That Rockefeller telegram incident would be laughable were it not for the fact that serious results are likely to come of it. Because of it, some pretended anti-trust legislation will doubtless be enacted, and the day of reckoning be put off for a few years longer.

It looks as though the president himself (yet possibly it may have been Knox) had made all arrangements to have the famous telegram sent:

"We are opposed to any anti-trust legislation, Our counsel, Mr. . . . ,