

## The Philosophy of Freedom

An Open Forum for Single Taxers

Open letter to the Regents and Trustees of the Nebraska State University.

Gentlemen: It is now up to you; and what are you going to do about it?

Whether, as the Omaha Bee naively suggests, "the new temple proposed to be erected for the benefit of university students may, or may not, be a long felt want," yet the proposition is assuming substantial proportions while the element of requisite funds therefor seems to be the only mooted question, and this has recently given to the people of the state from the lips of your chosen chancellor, Mr. Andrews, the very remarkable statement that "the American people are not able to sustain their public schools, but must sooner or later depend upon the generosity of enormously rich men."

As may well be suspected, this monstrous bit of sarcasm, having been taken seriously, has given rise to much comment through the public press and like everything else of late that is of a public nature, so far as the press is concerned, has a party taint to it.

As you are of course aware quite an acrimonious controversy is now going on between the Omaha Bee (rep.) and the World-Herald (dem.) concerning the morality of a conditional gift of \$66,000, proffered by one John D. Rockefeller, of coal oil defamations, in which the press at large throughout the state has joined in pros and cons, while at the same time the people, individually, regardless of their party affiliations, are uttering their protests in a percentage of 92 against to 8 for the acceptance of the Rockefeller gift.

It is conceded by all parties to this controversy, growing out of the fund proffered by Mr. Rockefeller, that because of the flagrantly immoral business methods of the donor, that such methods are not by any means to be approved. The Bee and its coadjutors give strong emphasis to this, colloquially, placing their favor of acceptance chiefly upon the exigency of the case, but with the further insistence that the immoral feature of the Rockefeller fund differs only in matter of degree from the immorality associated with all other funds that will be applied and have been so applied by the state and from private sources whose wealth is told only in "thousands," while that of the redoubtable Rockefeller is told by the

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Please mention The Independent in your reply.

millions. To this end the business men and wholesale jobbers of Omaha and Lincoln are brought upon the carpet, charged with accepting immoral advantages in form of rebates, special favors from railroads and of crushing weaker competitors, etc., and etc., which, if true as it undoubtedly is, gives the force of truth to the contention of the Bee and supplies as well the further axiomatic insistence that those who seek equity must themselves have their hands clean, and, also, that it is only those who are not also guilty that may throw stones.

Having read these recent criminalities and recriminations of the Bee and Herald, you have perhaps noticed that the latter journal, speaking to the negative case, does not deny the charge made by the Bee against the wholesale business men and jobbers, etc., save by the innuendo contained in its retort, "that it is rather severe arraignment of the wholesale jobbers of Omaha and Lincoln," and I expect that you will properly conclude that Mr. Rockefeller also regards it as "rather a severe arraignment" in his own case and only justifies by the resulting fruits of their respective "round ups." These controversialists, in furtherance of their contentions and in quest of corollaries, bring also before the tribunal of public conscience certain other media of obtaining public funds, such as fines imposed upon the business of the women in red, saloon licenses taxes on spirits and beer, fines imposed in police and higher courts for crimes and misdemeanors, all of which, it is not denied, go into the public exchequer to be disbursed in all the various details of local, state and national government, the modicum of which is also specially set apart for maintenance of our schools of all grades.

You have no doubt thought it strange that your learned chancellor with his knowledge of the various theses of economics and topsy-turvy tax and other gigantic business methods of the hour, the crass strenuousness that bids defiance to honor, has not taken the whole matter up, ab initio, and read the dissenters a certain lecture upon the rottenness of organized society, the organic injustice upon which our present system of taxation is based, the great inequalities in social life and business vocations which have been necessarily engendered thereby and declare, as well he might, that this state university embrolio is a mess brewed by society itself to which all the carrion birds of crime have brought their apologetic condiments to dispel its putrid taste and odor that smells aloud to heaven. The chancellor's moral character in all the past does not warrant you as regents and trustees to assume in advance that because of his procurement of this donation from Mr. Rockefeller, as a matter of expediency, that he will impose the vicious, ignoble methods of society's oil king upon those who enter that pagoda of immoral procurement for instruction, that morals in business is an innocuous desuetude, obsolete and to be regarded only as a Bible fetish.

No; those of us who know him are assured of the reverse and that as chancellor of Brown, or of our pagoda, the philanthropies of men whose ways are dark and dangerous to the weal of society will not dissuade him from a most scathing rebuke where censure is due. The open door has no terrors for him. To be sure, there was a better way: the attitude of the chancellor as solicitor of this gift is unquestionably wrong, nor should you permit its acceptance now. The chancellor should have advised you, as he is well qualified to do, of the only just and scientific system of taxation for this and all other purposes and have deferred this addition until the state did provide the funds. But as to the immorality of this particular fund the same may be said of all our state funds because of the manner in which they are levied, operating to discourage industry and thrift, promoting land monopoly that dented homes for millions of people and a promoter of city slums, levies blackmail upon all our social betterments by which society at large becomes silent partner in all vice, furnishing no capital, sharing no loss, as in ordinary partnerships, yet taking most of the proceeds.

The two crows that were wrangling as to which was blackest finally agreed that the only difference between them was their size and age. So it is in this case of yours and though "the proprietress of Omaha's gilded palaces of vice" is not urging her claims for memorial windows or

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the gambling dens the insignia of their art to be cut in pannel or arch, yet they may as consistently do so as Mr. Rockefeller and in either case it will be a clump of a student graduating there that does not come to know that the entire structure, from foundation to flag staff, was built with funds that are open to moral censure. Our system of taxation is as criminal as anything that a Rockefeller ever did. It not only devours widows' houses, but prevents them from being built while it forces tribute from thousands of people to build and maintain such high class institutions whose children are denied its benefits by poverty.

Rockefeller is guilty of land monopoly by consent of society, without which advantage he would no more have \$66,000 to bestow at the behest of your chancellor than an ordinary store clerk, farm hand, grocer, carpenter or pedagogue. Every respectable writer upon social statics unite in saying that to land monopoly alone is due 90 per cent of all the crimes known to society. Poverty is the necessary result of land monopoly, while poverty and vice are rightly called the twin whelps of the cosmic lair.

I have written you at some length thinking that because of the sophistry employed by the chief disputants to the controversy you may not get at the real milk in the cocoanut which they seem not to have done, which, especially as to the Bee, surprises me, for I remember when Mr. George was in Omaha a few years ago its editor really saw that "the cat" was there.

This accounts for the fact that in matter of logic he has distanced his contemporary. But finally, in your conclusions of the matter should you have any misgiving as to my concluding premise, that taking land values for revenue, abolishing all other forms of tax, fines and penalties, will furnish an ample fund, not only for schools and state universities, but for all other needed public use and also avoid such monstrosities as multimillionaires and the embarrassment of accepting or refusing their ill-gotten philanthropies. As to these things, I refer you to the chancellor himself, who, though he may have been too "long" on expediency in soliciting the Rockefeller fund, is by no means "short" on the science of taxation as outlined by the late Thomas G. Shearman, the recognized solon of that science.

Hoping that you will discourage this Rockefeller fund and memorialize the next legislature for a sane system of taxation and for referendum and initiative in the interests of common justice as herein suggested, I beg to be and remain, sincerely yours,

E. C. CLARK.

Syracuse, Neb.

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