

The Philosophy of Freedom

An Open Forum for Single Taxers

Editor Independent: In your issue of April 14 you say: "The taxes (on ground values in British municipalities) will have to be paid and the money will have to be earned to do it." And you ask, "Who will earn the money?"

I predict that you will receive dozens of replies like my own, namely: No one will earn the money. That is, no one will have to earn to pay those taxes any money which he would not have had to earn and to pay just the same if no such taxes had been imposed. The owners of the land must pay the taxes thereon out of their own pockets, and it is probably safe to assume that practically no landlords in British municipalities have to earn their money. Neither will they raise rents on account of the tax. Because their rents are already and always close up to the limit of value, and the tax on the bare land will in no way tend to make land scarcer or to check building or to create any kind of condition which would enable landlords to raise rents, but on the contrary. Does not the editor agree with us in this conte, ion?

GEO. B. ROUNSEVELL,
Cuba, N. Y.

Editor Independent. President Roosevelt's recent message to congress contains a sentence that deserves analysis. Regarding immigration he says that "we cannot have too much immigration of the right kind, and we should have none at all of the wrong kind." Considerable comment has been made in the press upon this question, indicating fear from the influx of foreigners—both of the "right kind" as well as the "wrong kind." However true the president's conclusions may be under present conditions, I could better agree with him had he written but the first six words, viz: "We cannot have too much immigration."

In a country as vast as are these United States, under conditions that would assure equal rights to the natural opportunities—such as a democratic government should assure—we could absorb and develop into good citizens the entire population of the civilized world. One has but to put such an astounding proposition to a mental analysis to prove it sound. We all live, in the last analysis, upon the products of land. In the United States only one-fifth of the land is in actual use, and little of this is put to its best use. This one-fifth supports 80,000,000 of people. At this rate, the whole country would sustain 400,000,000. Little Japan, with an area equal to two of our average states, supports a population of 43,000,000. Yet in Japan only one-fifth of the land is cultivated. If the United States were as thickly populated as Japan it would sustain a population of 1,075,000,000, or considerably more than the population of the civilized world.

Why is it then that we seem overpopulated and that already a vagrant horde infests our highways, while millions live—crowded like cattle in slaughter pens—within the confines of our cities? It cannot be that the land will not support them, for four-fifths of it is not yet in use; nor can it be

that there is not room enough, for 1,708,230,000 acres lies almost uninhabited.

The fault is not in our size, Mr. President, but in ourselves. Through our amazingly unjust governmental policy, the God-given right to free use of the earth is denied men, and through the subtle processes of nature we are paying the penalty we exacts for disobedience to her law. We have put the birthrights of all men—both those that are, and those that are to come—up for sale, with the result that four-fifths of it has practically been taken from the market by high price, and the power of monopoly to withhold it from use.

This same inequitable arrangement produces unreasonable inequalities and the unjust distribution of wealth, which so deeply disgraces this democracy.

The remedy lies in free land—freedom from monopoly. Not the few remote acres still possessed by the government, which are said to be free, but every acre of these United States—lakes and rivers, farm lands and city lots, mineral and timber lands, etc. They belong equally to all men, and to all men should be offered equally the use of them. Their rental values, taken yearly by the government, and expended for the equal benefit of all the people, would secure to each his rights in and upon the earth.

Give me a single state, under such a system of equity, and I could depopulate the surrounding states—merchants, laborers, foreigners, rascals, thieves, and all—not to the detriment of the particular state, but of the states from whence they came.

The criminals of England, deported to Australia and given free access to land—became the aristocracy and statesmen of Australasia. Justice begets freedom, and freedom begets men. Mirabeau says:

"Everything that breathes must obtain its nourishment by labor. This is the first law of nature, anterior to all human convention; it is the connecting bond of society; for every man who finds nothing but a refusal to his offer to work in exchange for his subsistence becomes the natural and lawful enemy of other men and has a right of private war against society."

E. O. BAILEY.

Theatre-Going

Cincinnati, April 17, 1904.—At the Vine Street Congregational church, the pastor, Herbert S. Bigelow, preached on "The Sermon in the Bells." Mr. Bigelow spoke of the noble use to which the theatre might be put and cited Sir Henry Irving's famous play as an example. He said in part:

The convictions of one age become the superstitions of the next and old customs melt away like snow drifts in early spring. With grim theology and severe manners our Puritan forefathers sought the wilds of America, not that they might establish religious freedom, but that they might be free to force their own gloomy views of life upon their neighbors.

Theatre-going was one of the vices

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which very naturally fell under the ban of the Puritan conscience. One of the shortest cuts to hell was supposed to be through the pit of the play-house. But all this is passing away. Life is not a penal institution. A man may be reverent without being mournful. The highest rectitude does not consist in mortifying the flesh by arbitrary and artificial rules. The Son of Man came eating and drinking. No conduct is wrong or unholy or irreligious which does not destroy one's own powers or invade the sanctity of another life. No joy is blameworthy which is not wrung from the sorrow or shame of another. Vice is high treason against the law of human brotherhood. Sanity in religion is a good thing. Men should not be asked to shun as wicked what is no sin.

Thus the feeling grows that discriminate theatre-going may be, not only innocent, but helpful. Plays like "The Bells" contribute much to this end. What preacher could hope to depict, in a single sermon, the pitiless vengeance of an accusing conscience as graphically as Irving does in the play that made him famous?

A man committed a murder. It was on a winter night and the sleigh bells were ringing. He hid all trace of his crime and with his ill-gotten gain he bought his way to honor and influence. But there was that black secret in his heart. He never forgot. How his soul would start at the sound of those bells! A man with a guilty conscience is the most abject slave in the world. Finally he had a dream. It was on the night of the marriage of his daughter. He had tried to say to himself that now he had triumphed and that his conscience was at rest. In his dream he thought that the hideous secret was out, that the law had him in its toils and that the death sentence had been pronounced.

In the morning they found him dying and in his death agony grasping convulsively at the imaginary rope about his neck. The man's conscience had become his hang-man. The story suggests how real may be the suffering of the unpunished criminal. One thinks how mild is the gibbet compared with this reign of terror within the soul. This drama is a portrayal of that august fact of human nature—the fact that man is unable to shake off the presentment that the deeds done in the body are fraught with eternal consequences and that his life is spent in the presence of the All-Seeing.

But think of the time when the conscience of man shall be sufficiently educated to recoil at the thought of war as men now recoil at the thought of single-handed murder. Today our statesmen talk of policies which involve wholesale murder as complacently as they discuss the digging of a ditch. They have not yet learned the enormity of doing through the agency of the government, deeds for which individuals would be hung. The blood that is spilt by the soldier is upon each man's hand. The moral law cannot be repealed by act of congress. If it is murder for one man to take a life, it is a thousand times more murderous for a thousand men to take it. We shall begin to be civilized when our conscience tells us these things.

In the great drama of human life, the eyes of man open wider and wider; conscience grows more and more sensitive to wrong; the glory of one age becomes the shame of the next and each succeeding century is a rung in the ladder that leads from earth to heaven.

W. W. Conover, of Hunterdon county, N. J., was one of the Barker district electors in 1900. He has recently enrolled as a member of the Old Guard of Populism, sending a dollar to help the work along. He believes there are a good many populists yet in his county, but the lack of organization renders it difficult to know all of them. He says, "I would be glad to attend the Springfield convention

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I. H. Hatfield—Attorney

DISTRICT COURT, LANCASTER COUNTY, NEBRASKA

In the matter of the estate of Charles H. Harrison:

This cause came on to be heard upon the petition of T. P. Harrison, administrator of the estate of Charles H. Harrison, deceased, praying for license to sell lot No. 20 in Yates & Thompson's subdivision of lot 17, in the northwest quarter of section 36, town 10, range 6, in Lancaster county, Nebraska, for the payment of debts against said estate and the costs of administration.

It is therefore ordered that all persons interested in said estate appear before me at the district court, Lincoln, Nebraska, on the 31st day of May, 1904, at 10 o'clock a. m. to show cause why a license should not be granted to said administrator to sell said real estate to pay debts and expenses.

E. P. HOLMES,
Judge District Court.

if my age and health would permit." Mr. Conover is 75 years of age, but has lost none of his interest in the cause of populism. It is to be hoped that his health will be such that he can be at Springfield July 4.

James G. Young, Monroe county, W. Va.: "I am a populist in principle, but we are dead here, I fear, as most of my populist friends went over to the republicans last election—just as far away from our principles as they could get. However, I see one of them has enrolled in the Old Guard."

Capt. G. W. Floyd, Westchester county, N. Y.: "All aboard for Springfield, Ill., July 4, 1904! To every word of Bro. A. C. Van Tine, respond with a 16 to 1 hurrah! hurrah! All aboard!"

T. A. Burman Greer county, Okla.: "Age and feeble health prevent me from taking an active part in the work. My heart is with you. Success to populism."

C. W. Edwards, Greer county, Okla.: "I am pleased to see the Old Guard lining up so rapidly. Give it to the plutes red hot."

D. W. Brown, Carroll county, Ga.: "I am very much pleased with The Independent."

E. B. Langham, Arkansas county, Ark.: "I am with you. Count me in your list of reformers for all time. I am in the cause from principle and not for office."

Wm. R. Singleton, Arkansas county, Tex., one of the pioneer reformers of the Lone Star state, writes: "I like The Independent. Send it until the result of the election is known."

C. Lady, Carmack, Ky.: "I like The Independent. It stands for justice."

Vanguard of Populism.

APPLICATION BLANK.

Charles Q. De France, Lincoln, Neb.

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Grand Enrollment Day,
(April 30, 1904.)

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(Cut this out, sign name and address, and mail to C. Q. De France, Lincoln, Neb. Let us add a thousand members to the roll, as the result of a little extra effort on Grand Enrollment Day—April 30, 1904. Speak to your populist neighbors about it.)