

A Challenge

Mr. Stern Challenges Socialists and Single Taxers to Cross Swords with Him

The net result of civilization is that a larger number have been enabled to evade the "punishment" pronounced in Genesis III., 17-19, especially, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." So-called "conservatives" are satisfied with the results of civilization, because they are enabled to eat bread in the sweat of some other person's face. They oppose any change—and who can blame them?

The radicals, so-called, are not satisfied with the results of civilization, because they are obliged to furnish a double, treble or quadruple portion of sweat for a single portion of bread. They are opposed to vicarious perspiration. Hence, they desire a change—and who can blame them?

It is doubtless true that all mankind fares better under modern civilization—if we adopt that best of all dodges, the system of averages. It is even possible that the meanest fed and clothed today is absolutely better fed and clothed than one in a similar station 500 or a thousand years ago. But relatively, the chasm is wider between those who sweat and those who eat than it ever was. In short, it seems that thousands of years of progress have simply resulted in lifting God's "curse" from a comparative few, while the great mass of humanity is compelled to sweat in greater profusion to produce prodigious quantities of bread for these few to waste.

The "conservatives" have great advantage in the contest, although few in actual numbers. They preach the gospel of content. They counsel us to "let well enough alone."

On the other hand, the radicals, although great in numbers, are divided into almost innumerable factions, each with a different plan for getting at the root of the difficulty. The prohibitionist sees families suffering from the wastefulness of a drunken husband and proceeds with propaganda work to "pulverize the rum power," never for a moment considering that drunkenness may be an effect instead of a cause. The single taxer, noting the enormous value of city property, and that immense wealth and abject, squalid poverty go hand in hand, lays everything to private ownership of land. The populist, seeing thousands of industrious farmers and other business men losing their holdings through mortgage foreclosure, lays most stress upon the money question.

And the socialist, recounting that modern improvements in wealth production have resulted in many lines in taking away from the laborer the tools of production, which, in a more primitive state were owned by him, concludes that this is the result of natural law which will finally bring all industry to the same condition, when the system will break down of its own weight and a democratic form of management with collective ownership be ushered in.

It is inconceivable that any of these are wholly right or wholly without some element of truth in their contentions. The great thing to be accomplished is to find some common ground upon which all can unite and some radical reform which can be achieved. Mr. Stern believes he has discovered this. He may be mistaken; but he is entitled to a hearing at any rate.

Mr. Stern has deposited ten dollars to be paid as outlined in his article. He will be given two columns in which to state concisely his plans for accomplishing reforms in money, land and transportation. After publication one month will be given single taxers and socialists to submit their replies, which must not exceed two columns each, and must be devoted to ANSWERING Mr. Stern—not to

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preaching about something else. Award and publication of the successful replies will be made as soon as possible thereafter.—Associate Editor.)

Editor Independent: Some months have elapsed since I contributed a number of articles which you kindly published in your journal. Conscious of the fact that many of your political co-workers have views to express, I have refrained from following up the subjects outlined. Though not a populist, I am again impelled to ask your indulgence. I am heartily in sympathy with your laudable desire to improve the economic condition of humanity. For a number of years I have labored along this same line and my experience teaches me that the so-called reformers are themselves very largely responsible for the failure to achieve.

It is with regret that I note that you are again pinning your faith to a leader, instead of seeking to evolve a few simple, equitable plans, which if enacted into law would solve frightful conditions and usher in an era of economic salvation. Political organization is of course necessary and desirable, but so long as you nominate candidates upon generalization platforms, instead of having them pledged to enact specific legislation, I am afraid that there will be little substantial to show for your efforts.

The spirit of fairness and toleration which you exhibit in according generous space to socialists, single taxers and others is commendable, but I fear that your generosity leads you into error. The followers of Karl Marx and Henry George deviously evade direct discussion. The admirable criticisms of your associate editor should not only be accorded space in the leading journals published by single taxers and socialists; but they should be replied to by leaders in these reform camps. Why should not Henry George, Jr., be pleased to pen a personal reply to cogent criticism by your editor? Why should not the Appeal to Reason publish the joint correspondence of its own associate editor with Charles Q. De France of The Independent? Rational discussion elucidates, but the faddists in the reform field suppress all criticism to which they are unable to reply.

Though not enrolled in the populist ranks I will make bold to submit a broad definition of the purpose of your party or organization. My perception is that you stand for effective economic reforms of a practical character. So long as you adhere to the old-time convention system and nominate candidates upon platform platitudes you will continue to be held up to derision and laughed at by the very multitude whom you in reality seek to succor. Humor and scorn are powerful weapons and the plutocratic forces have utilized and will utilize them in seeking to undermine and render impotent any movement aiming to secure economic justice unto all mankind.

The statements made by Editor T. H. Tibbles in his special letters to you from the east were read with great interest by myself. Along many lines he laid bare the inner workings of the plutocratic cliques. There is, however, another side to the equation. Not every newspaper here in our section suppresses rational discussion of important subjects. For years I have from time to time contributed a series of articles to the columns of the Evening Bulletin, of our city. The singular fact speedily developed that single taxers and socialists steered clear of public discussion. In the presence of public audiences their leaders admitted that I was entitled to be heard by them, in fact the chairman of the single taxers stated that "they were in the habit of according unlimited time to a speaker like myself." Though I have offered to reply to all questions, they will not accord me a hearing and when I establish facts in cold print, they either sneer at them or utterly fail to make reply. A number of years since I clearly explained a short cut demonstration which enabled any person with pencil and paper to speedily convince himself and others of the fact that a gold dollar placed at interest at 6 per cent at the birth of Christ, interest compounded annually, would today call for 246, \$11,203,231 masses of pure gold, each mass weighing 1,000,000,000 times the weight of the entire earth. Accuracy of mathematical process devised was not questioned, but A. C. Pleydell, a single tax leader, pompously demolished the undeniable mathematical demonstration by stating "the compound

interest sophistry resurrected by Mr.

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Stern is one of the jack-o'-lanterns used to scare the kindergarten class in political economy."

Further proof of the manhood of some eastern papers and likewise of the unblushing cowardice of so-called reformers is furnished by the following letters which appeared in the Evening Bulletin under date of March 2, 12, 18, and 31, 1904, respectively, without a single member of the reform forces joining issue. It certainly could not be on account of lack of publicity, for the Bulletin approximates circulation of 150,000 copies daily.

THE AIM OF SOCIALISM.

To the Editor of The Bulletin.—Sir: "John J. Fleming" at one fell blow condemns corporations and "the rank and file of the people." "Our socialistic friends" are alone worthy of admiration, though even they "may not be exactly correct in all the arguments they put forth." To a very considerable extent it might be judicious to reverse "Mr. Fleming's" position. I will not assert that the common, ordinary, every-day socialists are "selfish and avaricious." They are merely deluded followers of leaders who shun rational discussion as carefully as they would a foul plague.

There is a specific natural ultima-

tive, viz: access upon a basis of equality. All of the various cliques of warring reformers, who confuse and perplex the masses, are in reality seeking to apply this natural ultimation of justice to some portion of the economic domain. Is it not a fact that the real end sought by socialists is that all mankind should secure access to means of production upon a basis of equality?

This true end can be rapidly attained by means of specific constitutional legislation, which is evolutionary in character. This method of inaugurating fundamental reform might upset preconceived ideas regarding the scientific method of earth and humanity creation; but what of that if the people secure economic salvation? Build human government upon the natural-divine ultimation of justice and corporations will speedily be shorn of their ferocious attributes and the "rank and file" of the people will likewise have opportunity to exhibit nobler traits than at present. Rather difficult for economic slaves to be many men or womanly women.

If socialists desire to cultivate rational discussion, I will outline a practical method which they carefully avoid. Invite speakers who differ with themselves, but who have wrought out specific developments for ushering in an era of economic salvation. Limit