

Single Tax Candidate Arraigns Land System

ROBERT MACAULEY, PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE,
TELLS WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE U. S. A.

BRUCE BLIVEN IN NEW YORK GLOBE, OF SEPTEMBER 7, 1920

WHAT is the outstanding issue facing the American people in this presidential campaign?"

"I can answer you in one word—taxation.

"If the people only realized it, no other question of such vital importance confronts them today as the question of taxation. For by taxation we determine what part any man shall receive of the wealth he produces."

Robert Macauley, Single Tax Party candidate for the President of the United States, leaned forward in his chair, fairly shaking with the intensity of his thought, as he hurled this challenge at me.

"The Single Tax Party is interested in just one subject,



ROBERT MACAULEY

this year, as always," he remarked. "We are making our campaign on the solitary issue of taxation. We do not say that an intelligent taxation scheme would cure all the ills the nation is heir to, but we do believe that it would cure a major part of the economic and industrial evils which are rampant in the United States today."

FOR THE WHITE COLLAR MAN

Mr. Macauley, whose ideas are of course presented here without any indorsement, merely for information, wants it made plain that the Single Tax Party, which is seeking to put him in the White House next November—and which would be the most astonished group of men on earth if it should succeed—is not interested merely in the wel-

fare of the man who works with his hands. It is concerned with the problem of the white collar class just as much. In fact, Mr. Macauley declares that every man who sells his services to society is today a victim of what he regards as the monumental injustice involved in the private ownership of land.

"Mind you, we have no quarrel with inequalities of wealth," he hastened to explain. "But we insist that the returns to any individual ought to be based on the value of the services of that individual to society. We would have no objection whatever to a man's receiving an income of a million dollars a year if he earned a million. What we object to is a man's receiving a million dollars that somebody else earned, just because he happens to have what we regard as an unfair and unjust 'legal title' to a portion of the earth's surface which is needed so badly by someone else that the latter will pay a premium for the chance to use it."

The Single Tax theory, as readers of the *Globe* are doubtless aware, is so named because its founder, Henry George, proposed to do away with all other forms of taxation and secure all national, State and municipal revenues from a single tax on land. He would make this tax in every case equal to the full annual ground rent of the land involved. That is to say, no one would be entitled to profit from the mere ownership of land. He would only be entitled to profit from the use to which the land was put, for agricultural, business, or residential purposes.

LAND VALUES BELONG TO PEOPLE

Mr. Macauley in explaining his position said: "Now, we all know that the only reason land is valuable is because of the competition of people who use it. The more people there are desiring a single piece of land, and the more urgent their need for it, the greater the value of that land. If there were only one man in all North America, no land here would have any value. It is clear that it is the competition of people which creates land values. Therefore, the Single Tax Party maintains these values belong to all the people, not to any individual."

"The size of the burden which the people of the United States are forced to contribute to the private owners of land is almost unbelievable. Look, for example, at the State of Ohio. I can remember within my lifetime"—Mr. Macauley is fifty-five—"when the United States government would gladly give away free land in Ohio to any citizen who would come and settle on it.

"Today, forty years later, about the lowest price at which you can buy that land is \$400 an acre. Much of it costs \$1,000 an acre. That is to say, forty years ago the food which was raised on that farm and sold off it had no overhead cost except that of human labor and the cost of machinery and other equipment to till the soil. Today,

on the lowest valuation of \$400 an acre, that quarter-section of land is worth \$64,000. The food raised on that farm must bring enough money not only to pay for the labor involved, the cost of machinery and other equipment, but, at the average interest rate of 6 per cent., it must bring in \$3,840 a year as interest on the investment. No wonder that we talk about the high cost of living!

WHAT WE PAY FOR LAND

"The land in the United States, so far as can be estimated from a careful study of government statistics, has a value of one hundred twenty-five to one hundred fifty billions. I believe the latter figure is much more accurate than the first. It is also significant that a great majority of the people of the country own no land at all. All the land is in the hands of a small minority. As a matter of fact, the percentage is about 5 per cent. of land owners and 95 per cent. of landless people today. Three-fifths of this 5 per cent., or 3 per cent. of the total population, own just enough land for their own immediate purposes—a house and lot, or a comparatively small farm. The other 2 per cent. owns the rest.

"If we assume that their land brings in only 6 per cent per annum on the money invested—which is a reasonable supposition—then we have the staggering total of \$9,000,000,000 a year which the people of these United States are obliged to pay to the landlords for the privilege of making the ground produce the wealth which keeps us all alive. As a matter of fact, 80 per cent. of all the wealth produced in America is paid over for the mere right to use the land for productive purposes. Behind every farm, behind every factory, behind every productive enterprise in the whole country, stands the landlord, waiting to take the lion's share."

OUR HOUSING SHORTAGE

"You could ask no better example of the system than right here in New York City. Here you are confronted with the worst housing crisis in the history of the nation. Yet, right at this moment, when your tenements are so dreadfully overcrowded, one-third of all the land in New York City is in the form of vacant lots. It would be laughable if it were not so tragic."

At this point the writer remarked that many people regarded the Single Tax theory as confiscation of the property of the land owners.

"Confiscation? Nothing of the sort!" Mr. Macauley replied vigorously. "The passage of laws involving the Single Tax would merely be 'restoration.' We deny that any man has the right to own land, or ever has had that right. There are only two ways in which the right to the ownership of property may be established; either you must produce it yourself, or you must be able to show a bill of sale from the man who did produce it. The man who 'owns' land can do neither of these things. He did not make the land, which is the gift of nature to all the people. How, then, can he own it?

"When the United States government decided to free the slaves in 1860, it did not worry about confiscation of property," he remarked. "As a matter of fact, every municipality in the country is confiscating all the time. I live in Philadelphia, where the tax rate on real property is \$2.85 per \$100. That means that the City of Philadelphia confiscates every house within its borders every thirty-five years, since the taxes for that length of time amount to more than the total value of the house itself, assuming that the valuation for taxation purposes equals the real valuation—and you may rest assured that it always does, when the house in question is a poor man's house."

"For many years before the war we had almost continuous unemployment in America. Now that the artificial stimulation of the war is dying away, we are beginning to have unemployment again. Why? Because the system of private ownership of land does not give the worker a chance to follow the occupation which nature intended him to pursue, as a tiller of the soil."

IS AGAINST SOCIALISM

More strongly than any other point Mr. Macauley emphasized for me the fact that the Single Tax Party has no sympathy with socialism, and abhors the Bolsheviks quite as enthusiastically as any good and loyal member of the National Security League. Mr. Macauley declares that this is an American movement through and through; that they do not want or seek any change in the laws of the United States until the majority of the people of the United States want such a change, and that whatever change is demanded by the majority ought to be carried out, no matter how little it may be liked by a minority.

The Single Tax candidate is honest enough to say frankly that he has no expectation of being elected President this year. The party enters the national campaign primarily for educational purposes. However, he does declare that this movement is growing; that it has shaken off the inertia of many years' standing, which followed the death of its great leader, Henry George; and from now on, the people of the United States being oppressed as they are with a burdensome cost of living, he expects to see the Single Tax movement making great strides.

In appearance, Mr. Macauley is further from the "professional politician" than almost any of the other presidential candidates whom I have interviewed for the *Globe*. His hair, mustache and close-cropped VanDyck beard are all snow white. He has the burning eyes of the zealot, and in conversation he leans forward, looking up under his brows with concentrated enthusiasm for the ideas which he expounds. He is not a large man, is quick and deft in his movements, and can be characterized, perhaps as well as in any other way, by the fact that he is not at all ashamed to smoke a pipe in public.

Macauley's business in life has been a varied one. He was born in 1865 in Philadelphia, where he still lives. The

first twenty years of his maturity were spent as a clothing cutter, and he was one of the prime movers in the unionization of that trade in Philadelphia. For ten years he was in the insurance business, and twelve years ago entered newspaper work. He has had experience in all sorts of editorial work, leaving this field only recently to go into publicity for a large financial house in Philadelphia. He secured a leave of absence from his employers for the duration of the campaign in order, as he expressed it to me, that he might "go out and see how decisively he could be beaten."

In spite of his jocose method of speaking, Mr. Macauley has made very considerable sacrifices for the Single Tax idea. He has preached it enthusiastically for many years, and for some time edited a magazine of his own in Philadelphia devoted to the doctrine of the "great adventure." He was national chairman of the Single Tax Party in 1919 and 1920, and in the last two campaigns he was the party's candidate for United States senator and for governor of Pennsylvania, respectively.

The Foundations of Our Enthusiasm

THE enthusiasm for humanity is, like all impulses' transient, though it may be summoned again and again. But the enthusiasm based upon a rational knowledge of the world's economic problem abides as a calm perpetual glow which lights the dark places with a lamp of abiding comfort. It is in the nature of a religious faith based upon the knowledge that in our economic relations, as in fact in all other relations, "the power not ourselves," to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, moves in a mysterious way its wonders to perform.

To know that man in his relation to his fellow man, and to the planet, is destined for a grander future; that progress is real; that harmony and not discord in these relations is the law of his being; that civilizations may come, grander, nobler and more glorious than any of which we dream, merely by the recognition of the natural order which is the law of society as much as it is the law of the heavenly bodies, supplying as it does a religious faith founded upon knowledge, reinforces what is best in every religious faith ever entertained by man.

So simple seems the remedy, yet so complex the results! To take the rent of land, thereby making men free from economic thraldom, seems so little a thing to herald in the dawn of a new era. Yet it is the nature of liberty to call for little. All it asks is the absence of these bonds; all it asks is to be free. Man has never been free since the dawn of history. Whatever liberties he has won have left him still in bondage to the earth-owner; have, in many cases, increased the degree of his economic serfdom, with such mitigations as have been introduced from time to time for the benefit of the more distressed groups.

The thought that stirs within us at the thought of man-

kind free at last supplies a faith in comparison with which the old religious faiths seem to pale to hard and ineffectual dogma.

Is There a Law Of Social Progress?

IS there a law of growth in society? Is there a law of social progress? So much has happened in the last four years that seems to cast a doubt upon it. Many faiths were shaken by the world war, and among them the notion of a continuing stream of human progress.

The defect of the idea appears to reside in the assumption of its continuity. This the course of history expressly disclaims. Perhaps the truth is that civilization may really progress while whole forms of organization, good and bad within it, undergo processes of growth, decay and death. Civilization may be apprehended as a method which experiments with forms of organization as they appear, develops them to the perfection of which they are inherently capable or surrounding conditions permit, puts them to such use as they may serve, and finally discards them for the systems that grow out of newer necessities, or newer moral aspirations.

But this course, orderly, inevitable and constantly creative, is not free of interruptions. It is not possessed of the same unvarying and invariable character as the movements of the material universe, because the material universe is motiveless in itself. Civilization deals with human nature endowed with a free will; the laws of the material universe, and those governing the movements of civilization, do not possess an exact analogy. The most we can assume is the presence of a law of social growth, and this we are far from comprehending at this stage of the world.

But maybe history can tell us something. Nothing is surer than that the decay of great nations began with a diseased condition from within. No great nation has ever been overwhelmed from without and this negatives the notion that all nations must grow, and sooner or later decay and die. There is no warrant in history for this belief, for this reason. The diseases that overtake nations and result in their death are not inevitable accompaniments of national evolution. In other words, we can see how they might have been avoided. There is no reason at all for assuming that a nation cannot grow from century to century, reaching higher and higher levels of achievement. France and England among the modern nations have lived many centuries and show no sign of decadence. Spain has lifted herself out of a long decline and is showing signs of a renewed and vigorous life. That nations must grow, decay and die is a thought welcome to mental indolence, saving us the search for causes that operate to forward or retard national progress. But there is absolutely no warrant in reason or history for the assumption.

What are the forces that sustain national life at a high level of efficiency? Henry George has indicated his belief