

THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

A Record of the Progress of Single Tax and Tax Reform
Throughout the World

THE LONG ARM OF LAND MONOPOLY

(For the Review)

By ROBERT B. BRINSMADE

The American Institute of Mining Engineers is the principal U. S. society of its kind and has headquarters at the Engineering Building, 29 W. 39th St., New York. The membership of the Institute is restricted to those engaged in the mining industry and its chief activity is the publication of the transactions, consisting of technical papers contributed gratis by some of the 5,000 members.

The Institute was founded in 1871 and, having been a member since 1899, I used to wonder why there never appeared in its transactions any papers discussing the distribution of wealth and the existing laws of land ownership; for the mining industry is perhaps the one among all others where the control of the land and its resources is the key to all successful achievement. And I often pondered why, among all the hundreds of papers published since 1871 by different and supposedly independent writers, whose intellectual training had been of the best, we should find none that even looks askance at the fact of private land monopoly much less reveals its fundamental absurdity and iniquity from the standpoint of a democratic equality of opportunity.

Encouraged by the fact that my discussion from a Single Tax viewpoint of a reactionary paper* had been published in 1913, I contributed in 1915 a paper entitled "The Natural Taxation of Mineral Land," which embodied a complete reconstruction of our legal system of handling mineral deposits as the result of 20 years of thought and observation in many countries. But what was my surprise to find my paper summarily rejected by the Institute's Committee on Publication on the ground that its subject was outside

*Our National Resources and our Federal Gov't." by R. W. Raymond, *Transactions Am. Inst. Mining Eng.*, vol. xiii, p. 633.

of the range of mining interest, as the Institute's Board of Directors refused to set aside the Committee's rejection of my paper, I later published it in one of the leading mining weeklies,* and have also embodied its main features in the mining chapter of my book which applies the Georgian system to the reconstruction of Mexico.†

My experience in 1915 had caused me to suspect the good faith of the Institute management, especially as a scrutiny of the personnel of the Committee on Publication indicated that it contained an undue proportion of the officials of metal and coal land monopolies, yet I was hardly prepared for the Shockley episode of 1916. A full explanation of this disgraceful affair is contained in three articles in the *Mining and Scientific Press* of Oct. 21, 1916, and I can do no better than to quote from the editorial on the subject by T. A. Richard, one of the worlds great mining geologists and engineers:

“A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

“On another page we publish a protest made by Mr. W. H. Shockley against censoring of a paper presented by him to the International Engineering Congress at San Francisco last year. In the first instance, Mr. Shockley was requested to prepare a paper on the economics and sociology of mining: the request was made by H. Foster Bain, at that time a member of the management committee of the Congress. For those that do not know the former personally, we may say that he is a mining engineer of wide experience and ripe knowledge; he has shown good temper and no small amount of courtesy thruout the episode; in every respect he is a worthy member of the profession and entitled to the consideration that anyone of us has a right to demand.

“Mr. Shockley's paper was passed by the editors and accepted by the publication committee of the Congress; it was printed and circulated by the Congress. At the meeting of the Congress, in Sept. 1915, Mr. Shockley read an abstract of his paper and on that occasion one or two of the anthracite engineers objected to some of his statements. The discussion was cut short by lack of time. Subsequently Messrs E. Ludlow and R. V. Norris of the anthracite section at Willkes Barre, Pa., called upon Mr. Shockley to withdraw some of the statements in his paper. He demurred to doing so, suggesting that they contribute to the discussion and present their own view of the question in dispute. After some correspondence between the parties to the controversy, Mr. Shockley made sundry changes which did not suit the anthracite engineers. Finally on June 11 a telegram was addressed to the chairman of the Congress at San Francisco, insisting that all reference to the

*“The Natural Taxation of Mineral Land,” *Mining and Scientific Press*, Oct. 29, 1915.

†*El Latifundismo Mexicano, su Origen y su Remedio*, for sale at 30 cents (U.S.) postpaid, by Inj. A. Aragon, 5a del Pino 215, D. F., Mexico.

anthracite region be expurged from the paper by order of the directors of the Anthracite Section of the American Institute of Mining Engineers.

"When this imperious dispatch was received by the Secretary of the Congress, he called a meeting of representative mining engineers and officials of the Congress. Those present at the meeting resolved unanimously that the tone of the telegram was most objectionable and that the Chairman of the Congress, then in Brooklyn, be advised to publish Mr. Shockley's paper as already amended. On June 23 the directors of the American Institute of Mining Engineers voted that unless Mr. Shockley's paper was changed to meet the views of the Anthracite Section, it should not be published. A copy of this resolution was sent to the chairman of the Engineering Congress. He, meanwhile, had ignored the expression of opinion voiced by the committee, called by the Secretary on June 12, and was now inclined to waive his rights. The offices of the Congress were being maintained pending the settlement of the dispute, causing worry and expense. Whereupon Mr. Shockley cut the matter short by agreeing to omit the remarks to which objection had been made by the Anthracite Section, replacing them by an explanatory note.

"When the facts of the case became known, the matter was brought before the San Francisco Section of the Institute, a feeling of resentment against the injustice done to Mr. Shockley was freely expressed, and on Oct. 10 a resolution was carried unanimously stating *inter alia* that 'the action of the directors of the Am. Inst. of Mining Eng. in censoring the publication of Mr. Shockley's paper is unwarrantable.' That is the story to date. It is not a pleasant one.

"Mr. Shockley expressed no opinion of his own concerning the conditions prevailing in the anthracite region, he said only that if the wages were so much and the cost of living so much, then it was probable that a number of heads of families were inadequately paid. He quoted figures from the U. S. Immigration Commission and from a State Report of Pa. If the gentlemen at Wilkes Barrie did not like it, they were at liberty to refute Mr. Shockley in the usual way, by contributing their opinions to the discussion of his paper. They had no right to demand the deletion of the paragraphs that did not please them and they were not warranted, we submit, in urging upon the directors of the Institute to take drastic action. As for the directors, their action is indefensible. By what right did they dictate to the Engineering Congress, what it should or should not publish? It is true the Institute was one of the five technical societies that contributed to the underwriting of the Congress, but did that give them the privilege of editor or censor? As for the Congress management, it acted weakly and ingloriously, in surrendering its responsibility to the clamor of a coterie of excellent gentlemen representing the one great natural monopoly in the U. S.

"We do not believe in the suppression of honest criticism, we believe that

suppression prevents the creation of a healthy public opinion; in the end it hurts those criticised much more than a frank ventilation of conflicting ideas. But the most objectionable feature of the episode is the action of the directors of the Institute in issuing a ukase against one of its own members and against inferences expressed by him, not in the transactions of the Institute, but in the proceedings of another organization. This is an interference with the liberty of the professional man and it is not to be tolerated."

Nothing need be added to the ringing words of Editor Richard for the sacred right of free speech even in the face of the anthracite land monopoly. But unfortunately for mental liberty, few technical journalists can be found who would duplicate Mr. Richard's brave defiance of the Powers that Prey. Like their counterparts, the popular journalists, they are too obsessed by a fear of losing their jobs to ever monkey with the monopolistic buzz-saw and its long arm. Yet the truth is now out and the Shockley episode will open the eyes of unsuspecting thousands to the fact that the sinister censorship of private monopoly has penetrated to even the inner sanctum of our professional engineering societies. Like the dismissal of Scott Nearing from the University of Pennsylvania, it is a startling exhibition of the growing impudence of our law-fostered plutocracy.

TWO SIGNIFICANT TAX REPORTS

By THE EDITOR

Truly we have cause for elation. Those who are impatient at what they think the slow progress of the cause will do well to note the rapidly changing attitude toward the Single Tax movement of taxing bodies, of State Tax Commissions and special committees appointed to investigate the subject of taxation. From among these no more important and gratifying document has emanated than that of the Fifth Biennial Report of the Minnesota Tax Commission for 1916. We shall content ourselves with a review of Chapter VII, "The Taxation of Land Values." Beginning with a brief notice of a meeting of the All-Minnesota Development Association, at which a resolution was adopted favoring a reduction of tax burdens on personal property and buildings and improvements on land, the Report, while noting the presence at this meeting of "numbers of Single Taxers," as well as those who favored "a modified form of the Henry George theory of taxation," says:

"Minnesota is one of the few States that still persists in taxing all forms of personal property. Many of the other progressive States of the Union have abolished such taxes in whole or in part and have substituted other more equitable revenue measures. Scarcely any other nation outside of the United