

EDITORIAL

THE “POST” AND THE SINGLE TAX.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**T**HE Tribulations of a Capitalist” should have been the title of the November 11 article, in which the New York *Evening Post* seeks to draw comfort from the numerous manifestations in Europe of a move to tax the unearned increment in land values, by trying to make out that those manifestations are remote, not in degree only, but also in kind, from Henry George’s object.

Henry George was an atavistic exhibition of the uprising bourgeois of the eighteenth century. The uprising bourgeois, a representative of Capital, had the well developed repugnance of his class for the feudal lord, whose apanage was Land. The means of Power readily becomes the insignia of Power, and, as such, sacrosanct in the estimation of its holder. Land, being the means, hence the insignia of feudal Power, was sacrosanct, hence, above taxation. The competitor for Power with feudalic Land, Capital, of course sought to break the means of feudal Power; to dim the halo around the insignia which oppressed it; and that, naturally, translated itself into a practical move to lower the dignity of the insignia and place it under the yoke of taxation. The revolutionary essence of Capital, its purpose, not to share merely, but to supplant Land, was not even concealed. Capital did not try to reduce Land to its own level as a fellow tax-payer; Capital purposed, and boldly did it declare its purpose, to step into the shoes of Land as the apanage of Power, and itself become sacrosanct, hence above taxation. The physiocratic motto “Impot Unique,” Single-Tax in English, tells the story. Land, and Land alone was to be taxed: Capital was to go scot-free. It was a social revolutionary program in which one class of Property, hitherto held vassal, was to dethrone another class of Property, place it under the yoke, and itself assume “Sacred Sovereignty.” The atavistic exhibition of these Property-class ambitions was Henry George.

At first blush the expectation would seem legitimate:—"Seeing that the program of Capital in the matter of Land taxation was not carried out in full; seeing that the idea of the removal of all taxes from all other property but Land was an idea responsive to a correct Capital-class instinct, in that the execution of the idea would vest Capital with the whole hide of Labor, whereas now Capital has to share the hide with Land; seeing all this, the atavistic exhibition of Henry George should have been received with long, loud and prolonged applause from Capital." The expectation, together with the reasoning involved, would be legitimate if other things had not also happened.

Between the eighteenth century season when the revolutionary pulse of Capital beat strong, and, hence, beat frankly, and the season when the Henry George atavistic exhibition took place, Capital had got so substantially in the saddle that the "white parasols and elephants mad with pride," which formerly distinguished Land, had become pretty drabbed and pretty tame; the scepter had de facto passed from Land to Capital; Capital could now afford to "go slow." In short, the one-time revolutionary pulse now beats soberly and, hence, beats craftily—all the more in sight and sound of the ominous revolutionary rumblings that are now arising against the modern sovereign, Capital, itself. At such a season, such an atavistic exhibition as Henry George's is not received with plaudits by the revolutionists of yore; at such a season it is received with the suppressed growls and the outbursts of disapprobation that are bestowed upon an "enfant terrible," a kid that blabs out secrets which his elders seek to keep dark.

The statistics of all countries, especially of that leading capitalist country, our own, demonstrate that Capital is more and more slipping the yoke of taxation, and more and more fastening it on Land, The "Impot Unique," the real Marseillaise of Capital, that lyrically rocked the infant's cradle, has not lapsed into a "nursery song": it has remained a Star of Bethlehem, that unerringly points to Capital's goal, and is unflaggingly, however deviously and surreptitiously followed by Capital. Add to this the circumstance that the now swelling waves of the Socialist Revolution, the legitimate successor of the wave of the Revolution of Capital, causes the very word "Revolution" to jar upon the ears of now staid-conservative Capital, and the secret is plain why the Henry George atavism can find no favor with the powers that be. A

Revolution, once accomplished, hates to be reminded of its past; and it hates the reminder all the more if the reminder comes from a friendly source, even tho', as in this instance and at this late social hour, the reminder spells Reaction.

Small wonder the *Evening Post*, endeavors in lengthy columns to believe, and to cause others to believe that "Henry George's principles of confiscation" are "absolutely ignored" in the European budgets that are taxing recent rises in land values. Small wonder the *Evening Post* seeks to find comfort in the smallness of the fraction of the percentages of the tax on increment. Small wonder at the tribulations of that capitalist organ.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org