

EDITORIAL

## WELCOME HOME!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE Single Tax, no more than any other theory, can be defined in one sentence. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that Single Taxism in its original purity abhorred, and probably still abhors, the idea of the public or collective ownership of the implements of work—the machine. It is no injustice to the Single Taxer, simon-pure, to say that he rebels against the evils of capitalism—



ELLA WHEELER WILCOX (1850–1919)

the private ownership of the machine—only, he imputes these evils, not to capitalism, but to landlordism. The Single Tax thus stands in a contradictory position. It spurns the A, B, C, of class-rule, but it hugs to its heart, the heart of its mind, the language that same A, B, C spells. It is impossible that the error of such a position could long withstand the fire of its starting and noble sentiment. When economics are not abreast of sentiment, either a smash-up follows, or sentiment gradually heats economics into shape. Whether the smash-up has already set in with the Single Tax it is unnecessary here to look into. Certain is the fact that individual and one-time leading Single Taxers are gradually yielding to the process of maturing from Single Taxism to Socialism. The latest poetic effusion, entitled “The Protest,” of the talented Ella Wheeler Wilcox, long and justly regarded as a brilliant star in the Single Tax firmament, is a striking illustration in point. “The Protest” is so thrilling in its Sapphic fire as to deserve reproduction in full:

Said the great machine of iron and wood,  
“Lo, I am a creature meant for good.  
But the criminal clutch of godless Greed  
Has made me a monster that scatters need  
And want and hunger wherever I go.  
I would lift men’s burdens and lighten their woe,  
I would give them leisure to laugh in the sun,  
If owned by the many—instead of the one.

“If owned by the people the whole wide earth  
Should learn my purpose and know my worth;  
I would close the chasm that yawns in our soil  
’Twixt unearned riches and ill-paid toil;  
No man should hunger, and no man labor  
To fill the purse of an idle neighbor;  
And each man should know when his work was done  
WERE I SHARED BY THE MANY—NOT OWNED BY ONE.

“I am forced by the few, with their greed for gain,  
To forge for the many new fetters of pain;  
Yet this is my purpose, and ever will be,  
To set the slaves of the workshop free  
God hasten the day when, overjoyed,  
That desperate host of the unemployed  
Shall hear my message and understand,  
And hail me friend in an opulent land.”

If even the strictness of grammar may yield to the license of poetic fervor, why should not the strictness of economic science? Accordingly, no fault shall here be found with the use of the word “Greed.” For one thing, “Sociologic Evolution,” the correct thought, is a term of rather intractable meter; for another, it is hard to rhyme with. Moreover “Greed” partakes of the feature of most Effects: it reacts back so strongly upon its Cause that it is easily mistaken for the Cause itself.

We shall not indulge the ungrateful sport of carping criticism. The “Protest” of the quondam Single Taxer, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, is unerring, and fervidly to the point. Were the machine “shared by the many,” not “owned by one,” in short, were Socialism the tenure of ownership, instead of “scattering need,” it would scatter “leisure and laughter.”

The Socialist Movement welcomes home the Sappho of America. Socialism is the home of all who rightly feel and rightly think.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded March 2009

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)