

## The Philosophy of Freedom

An Open Forum for Single Taxers

### THE BUGS AND THE BEES.

As the farmer went round 'mid his plants and trees,  
He saw the bugs and he saw the bees.  
"Oh! the pesky bugs, they'll ruin my crop,  
With poisonous dose their work I'll stop,  
But the bees I'll shelter and keep alive,  
With best of food and best of hive.

With poison his trees and plants he sprayed,  
And thus the pesky bugs he slayed.  
Each swallowed his draught and said  
"Here goes,"  
Then rolled on his back and turned up his toes.  
The farmer laughed in boisterous glee,  
"Requiescat in pace, O! bugs," said he.

The farmer toiled from day to day.  
He garnered his oats, his wheat, and his hay,  
With busiest might he toiled each hour  
To catch the shine or to catch the shower.

In the human hive I'm a busy bee,  
But a pesky bug, well, that's not me.  
His neighbors he saw, who dwelt near by,  
Raise never a crop, nor goods supply;  
But only a sign did tell this tale,  
To everyone, "Here are lots for sale."  
And the farmer said, as his ground he dug,  
My neighbor's no bee, he's only a bug.

In the human hive there are bugs and bees,  
For some must toil while others may squeeze,  
While some are raising the wheat or rice,  
Others are raising nought but a price.  
While some like bees enrich with their toil,  
Others like bugs live only to spoil.

Then the taxer came with the 'sessor's roll,  
I'm coming to each to gather my toll,  
The man who makes improvements great  
Must pay the most to support the state.

But when improvements there are none,  
We'll place the taxes lightly on.

The farmer stamped, the farmer swore,  
Said he, "I'll have this tax no more.  
This taxer ain't worth bread or cheese,  
He don't know which is bugs or bees.  
If he had a farm, the stupid plug,  
He'd poison the bees and feed the bug."

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To drop a man in the middle of the Atlantic ocean and tell him he is at liberty to walk ashore, would not be more bitter irony than to place a man where all the land is appropriated as the property of other people and to tell him he is a free man, at liberty to work for himself and to enjoy his own earnings.—Henry George, in Social Problems.

JUSTICE—NOT CLASS LEGISLATION.

The remedies offered for existing inequalities of wealth, are numerous, all centering in the cry, "Destroy the trusts." But how? By taking away their monopolistic power? Or, by placing them under governmental control?

The first is the single tax method; the second is socialistic.

I propose, briefly, to show that the American workingmen and farmers do not need any assistance from the national government, in order to become independent and prosperous. All they ask is for monopoly to get off their backs. Let justice be done to all. That is the first step. Let that experiment be tried; and then see, if there be an able-bodied, strong, healthy American citizen so abject as to ask for any "special privilege" legislation for himself or for his class.

There is not a trust or a monopoly today but owes its very existence to some special legislative favor, from either the national or from the local governments (which favors are the chief cause of political corruption), or else it owes its existence to the exclusive possession of exceedingly valuable land. To destroy all monopolies resting upon legislative favor is easy. Repeal the laws which grant them their favors.

In other words, let the national government raise its revenue in some other way than by placing taxes upon

sugar, steel, iron, coal, or any other article of consumption. There are 89 millions of people in these United States, and a tax of 2 cents upon every pound of sugar they consume is quite an unnecessary burden, amounting to millions of dollars annually for the sugar trust. The same is true, proportionately, of many other trusts. Nearly every article of consumption these millions of people are using daily is thus taxed, a portion of which is going to the national government as revenue, and the rest to foster monopoly. Such industries are paupers, living by taxing the labor of others. Of these taxes upon consumption, the wage-earners and farmers pay by far the largest share. Yet, alas, they vote for the party that upholds them. Let them but make an attempt to repeal these tariff taxes, by substituting a new system of raising the national revenue, one that would be just to all, and there would go forth such a wall from monopoly and from corrupt politicians that should make them known and understood of all men, because of their false cries of patriotism and their hypocritical solicitude for the dear workingmen and farmers.

That same cry went up in England when "the corn laws" were repealed. "Stop, stop for heaven's sake," cried the partakers of the tariff, "you'll throw workingmen out of employment. You'll lower wages." But Cobden knew better, and moreover the people of England knew better. The laws were repealed, and wages rose; the times became more prosperous for the masses.

Our tariff laws all favor class legislation. Let justice be done to all alike. Let the national revenue be raised by a small tax upon the value of the land of the nation. Such a tax would fall heaviest upon those monopolies that exist by virtue of their exclusive possession of exceedingly valuable land, such as mines, oil wells, railroad, telegraph and telephone, gas, street railway, and other franchises.

Were the national government to take possession of these industries, such as the coal fields, they must needs pay the present owners for their property, in interest bearing bonds, so the coal barons would merely exchange one form of wealth for another form of wealth, no doubt, selling their mines out to the government at a high valuation, and from henceforth the people of the United States would have to be taxed to pay the interest annually upon those bonds, while the national government must perform the work of superintending the coal industry. The coal monopoly would merely be changed to a coal bond monopoly.

No, the only way to destroy monopoly is to tax it out of existence. The power to tax is the strongest power in the hands of the people. Let them use it; but not abuse it. Treat all men alike, be they rich or poor. For example:

If a man owns land worth \$10 per acre, tax him upon that value only; if a man owns land worth \$30,000 per acre, or a million dollars per acre, tax him upon that value only; the result would be that millionaires would then be taxed as high in proportion to their privileges, as are now the small home-owners and the farmers. The weight of taxation would then be shifted upon monopoly, there to remain. This tax should be so high as to make all monopolies, at all times, unprofitable.

This reform in the system of taxation would lift the entire burden of taxes from all wealth that is engaged in producing more wealth, from merchandise, stock, machinery, from every tool of industry, from farm produce, cattle and growing crops.

Monopoly would be destroyed; production increased, and the share now going to monopoly (or privilege) would go to government to defray all public expenses.

The subject of taxation is the most important one now before the people, one that is likely to arouse this whole nation as it once did the people of England in the days of Cobden; and France, just before the revolution. This subject has had fresh light thrown upon it by modern science, and so this knowledge, when it is fully understood by the masses, will serve them to great advantage.

The people must learn that the right and just principle in taxation is not to tax a man in proportion to his wealth; but in proportion to his special privileges. In short, this reform does not seek to tax any form of wealth, but to tax privileges.

The selling or rental value of land everywhere is a social privilege. This value is the only value that is pro-

duced by society, collectively. The single tax would assess all men at the same rate upon the value of their land, or social privileges.

Those holding land of small value would pay a small tax, while those holding land of enormous value would pay a large tax, but no more than their privileges were worth in the open market. This is justice. Equal rights to all and special privileges to none. This single tax upon privilege (or monopoly) would raise a revenue sufficient to meet all expenses of government economically administered; so there would be no need to tax any form of individual wealth.

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### PAINE'S LAND VIEWS.

Editor Independent: I am preparing an article on Paine's views of the land question, and I intend to show that his views were similar to those held by Henry George.

I shall forward it to you for examination and if it meets with your approval, will be obliged if you can give a place in your valuable paper.

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3515 Wallace st., Philadelphia.

(The editors of The Independent do not profess to be "authorities" on the Henry George single tax philosophy, and do not hold out The Independent as an organ of the single taxers. They are trying to get at the truth, and for that reason have devoted this page to the cause—an open forum where single taxers may express their views. The Independent will be glad to receive Mr. Elliott's article.—Associate Editor.)

### The Natural Tax

Economic "rent" is "wealth or labor received in return for the use of land." One may, himself, use a piece of land which is advantageously situated, and therefore is so desirable that others would give something for its exclusive use, and by that use he may obtain the added product which the favorable location enables him to produce. The wealth he thus gets in return for using the land is "rent." Or, instead of using the land himself, he may permit someone else to use it on condition that the person so using it does a certain amount of work for him, or pays him a portion of the product, in money or in kind. The labor, or the wealth, the owner received from the user of that land would be "rent." When one buys land and pays for it, the amount paid is the "rent" commuted, and if the buyer does not pay the whole purchase price at once, but lets some of it stand on mortgage, the interest, so-called, which he pays, is really not interest at all, but "rent." According to Ricardo's law of rent, "the rent of land is determined by the excess of its product over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use." This applies to all land, both in the country and in the city; in fact, the most valuable land, that which will yield the most "rent," that is, the largest return for its use, is city land. Some people seem to think that the farmers are the largest land owners and many farmers themselves labor under that mistake. They seem to think that if all other taxes were abolished and only "rent" taken in taxation, their burdens would be greatly increased. But the truth is just the other way, for, estimating by "value," by the "rent" their land will yield, their "broad acres" amount to very little and their tax would be correspondingly small. Estimating their land by its value and not by its area, as it would be estimated in that case, they are not large land owners at all, but very small ones. The most valuable land is in the largest cities and it is there that the rent tax would fall most heavily.

Now, why should all other taxes be abolished and only "rent" taken in taxation? The community can have no rights not possessed by its members. If no one man has a right to do a certain thing, then no number of men can have that right, for nothing multiplied even by infinity is still nothing. No one man has the right to take another's property by force; then no number of men can have that right. Therefore, all taxes which take from men their rightful property are wrong and should be at once abolished. But "rent" is not rightfully private property. The right of ownership rests on production. Land is not produced by men and therefore cannot be rightfully owned by them. All persons come into the world by the same warrant and have therefore the same right to live. No one can live without using land; therefore, since the use of land is essential to life, and all people have the same

right to life, it follows that their right to use land must be equal. The value of anything justly belongs to the rightful owner of that thing; therefore "rent," "wealth or labor received in return for the use of land," the right of use being equal, must belong to all equally and should therefore be taken by the community to pay the common expenses. All other wealth belongs to individuals, since each person has an exclusive right to himself and consequently to everything he produces by the exercise of his faculties and the use of no more than his share of the land. So long as he works on land which will not yield rent his whole product is justly his; and when he uses land that does yield rent and pays that rent to the community, its rightful owner, all the rest of the product is justly his. Therefore the rent-tax is the natural tax, and should be the only tax, the "single tax."

The rent-tax is paid now, and always has been since land was treated as private property, and always will be while it continues to be so treated, but it is not paid to the rightful recipient. Instead of being paid to the public, to whom it rightfully belongs, it is collected by private individuals and retained by them as their own property, while the public which permits this misappropriation of its natural and rightful revenue, resorts to all sorts of unjust and burdensome taxation, the public appropriation of private property, to get the means to pay the public expenses.

This unjust and unreasonable course is the direct or indirect cause of involuntary poverty and of the long train of evils which flow from this prolific source.

The private appropriation of rent engenders speculation in land, the holding of land wholly or partially out of use while waiting for its value to increase. Keeping good productive land idle, forces men to resort to inferior land, with the result that rent is forced up and wages down; for both rent and wages are governed by the "rent line," the "line which bounds land that will yield rent." When this is forced out beyond where it would normally rest, the result is an abnormal increase in land values and a corresponding decrease in wages, "wealth or labor receive in return for labor."

On the other hand, the public appropriation of "rent" would destroy land speculation, for there would be no inducement to hold land for a rise when that rise was sure to go into the public treasury. Good land would then always be within the reach of all and no man would have to be idle who wished to work. Wages would be raised to the full earnings of labor and kept there, while "rent" would be reduced to normal and kept there, for no matter how high it might afterwards go, it could never be more than the land was worth for use at that time.

The blessings which would follow the abolition of our present unjust system of taxation (if such an unscientific jumble can be called a system) with all its related monopolies and privileges and the adoption of the single tax, the "natural tax," are too numerous to mention here; suffice it to say that it would abolish the present industrial slavery, with all its attendant miseries, and would make mankind truly free, thus paving the way to the realization of the divine ideal of human brotherhood, not as a divine sentiment merely, but as a grand practical reality.

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### When Thieves Fall Out

Walter Wellman claims to have discovered a conspiracy on the part of Lodge, Quay and Penrose which contemplates—

First—To drive out of the public service Machen and Beavers, officials who fell under the displeasure of Wynne and refused to bow the knee to his ambition to be the boss of the postoffice department.

Second—To smirch the administration of Charles Emory Smith, former postmaster general, and thus satisfy the longings of his political enemies—Quay and Penrose.

Third—to involve Perry Heath, formerly first assistant postmaster general, and through him, if possible, his political sponsor, Mark Hanna, who is most cordially hated by Lodge and Quay.

Fourth—To make so much trouble for Postmaster General Payne that he may be driven from office, leaving Lodge in possession of the field as President Roosevelt's chief political adviser and affording an opportunity for the promotion of Lodge's man Wynne to the postmaster generalship, or the appointment of some other tool of Lodge if Wynne should not be regarded as big enough for the place.