

WHAT TO READ FIRST

(Written for Henry George Edition of The Independent.)

Naturally single taxers, when asked this question, give various answers. The same man will not always recommend the same books to all comers. For the majority of thoughtful readers my recommendation would be—

- 1. Social Problems.
2. Protection or Free Trade.

If "Social Problems" will not stir any mind to the need of changing the conditions that be, and to the impulse to help on the change, then nothing will. It is intensely interesting, and it is simple and clear throughout. It is a book of the heart as well as of the head. It comes straight from an earnest heart intensely sympathetic and from a sincere mind profoundly convinced of a great truth.

Of all Henry George's books, the one which marches on with closest reasoning and most inevitable argument has always seemed to me to be "Protection or Free Trade." Thought follows thought with straightforward sequence, and with presentation so clear that no open mind can resist the chain of conclusions. The reader is brought near the close to an argument and plea for the single tax which for plain, homely, earnest reasoning has never been surpassed.

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SINGLE TAX AND SOCIALISM

(Written for Henry George Edition of The Independent.)

I prefer to dwell on the similarities between socialism and the single tax rather than to exaggerate their differences. The advocates of both see the injustice of our present industrial arrangements and long for a time when every man shall have opportunity for work and receive the full value of his services, which, in all cases of manufacture, would be the value of the product of his work. To secure this end the socialist says that the community must seize all the means of production, manage them, and divide the product equitably. It must be admitted that this is a stupendous undertaking. The means of production include all land, mines, forests, water power, railways, factories, stores and shops, and a committee appointed today to draw up a scheme for their administration in a single state would find the task well-nigh impossible. The single taxer sees these difficulties and endeavors to simplify the problem. He tries to classify and separate the means of production into different categories. First of all, there is the land, which no man made—a natural gift to all mankind and necessary to life, including the natural monopolies involved in the possession of coal mines, oil fields, etc., and in the use of highways for railways, trolley lines, gas pipes, telephone and telegraph wires, etc. Then besides these right in land—all of them monopolistic in their nature—we have the category of capital free from monopoly—that is all manufactured things, houses, goods and machinery, which can be reproduced freely if the sources of raw material are left open and which consequently involves no monopoly.

Now, the single taxer says that it is wise to discriminate between these different kinds of possessions. Insofar as the franchises for rails, wires and pipes are concerned, he is willing to accept socialism because the municipalization of these utilities is evidently perfectly practicable. Then he sees the justice of insisting upon giving an equal right in land to every citizen, and he finds that the same end which the socialist expects to attain by "nationalizing" the land can be secured by taxing it to its full annual value, remitting all other taxes. Obviously no man has any advantage over any other in respect to land, if he pays the full value of his holding each year to the community. The tax thus placed on land without including improvements will free all manufactured things, including houses, from the heavy burden of taxation which they bear and increase enormously the production of wealth. It is a strange fact that taxes on land (without including improvements) stimulate production, so that the land may pay the tax, while taxes on houses and goods discourage the production of houses and goods. Put a tax on cats and people begin to drown them. Put a tax on vacant lots and the owners are forced to build on them, or to sell to some one who will.

The issue between socialist and single taxer lies in the intention of the former to seize all private, personal property used as a means of production, even where no monopoly right is involved. The single taxer contends that this is unjust. A man is entitled to what he makes, just as a bird is entitled to its nest, and to seize all the machinery and factory build-

ings of the country would be indefensible. Furthermore, everything but land is gradually wearing out; the life of machinery is only a few years, and if everyone is given an equal chance in the raw material from which machinery and manufactures come, wealth will soon be justly distributed. It is sufficient to divert the river at its source; the water already in the old channel will soon disappear. Is it not better to take one step at a time? There are far more arguments for the nationalization of the land than of the machinery upon it. Why not kill land monopoly first? When that is done, we can see if it is necessary to go farther. And it is the farmer, of all others, who should take the side of the single tax, for his farm has little or no ground rent value, while the only sufferers from the new system would be the holders of unearned increment in cities and towns—and even they would share in the general increased prosperity of the community.

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Political economy as a science owes its origin to Henry George. Others had written upon the subject, but not in the truly scientific method. Mr. George was the first to base his premises upon both natural and moral law—rather, proving these laws really one—and drawing his conclusions with iron-clad logic from inexorable facts. He gives, not his own opinion, but nature's unquestioned laws, self-evident truths. This is true science. Contrast it with the senseless jumble of unrelated facts and non-sequiter theories of the "economics" writers, who utterly ignore both nature and morals.—W. H. T. Wakefield.

A QUESTION OF MORALS

(Written for Henry George Edition of The Independent.)

Though independent political action has often been urged upon single taxers upon grounds of expediency the idea has never gained favor, the majority considering it more politic to remain in the existing political organization and "follow the line of least resistance." But the question arises, is it morally right for us to do this? Can we conscientiously support and vote for the measures that they advocate? This question must be settled before we can consider that of seeming expediency, for nothing can be truly expedient if in conflict with good morals. Assuming this as true, let us see whether we can rightfully countenance and vote for existing parties.

The organizations agree in upholding the private ownership of land, in the taxing of the products of labor, in the advocating of a tariff differing merely as to the purpose of the tax; they disagree as to the method of regulating trusts, as to the kind of money we are to use and upon the policy of expansion. These policies advocated by them are all violence of natural law and justice. We know that private ownership of land is the source of industrial slavery, and that taxation of the products of labor is morally equivalent to robbery, and that in favoring such measures these political parties are doing what must bring poverty and distress to millions of people. We also know that "trusts" and "expansion" are but logical results of private ownership of land and of the spirit it engenders, and that it is senseless to try to fight these, the symptoms, while approving of our present land laws as all the existing parties do. Now knowing all these policies to be absolutely wrong, and that they are utterly opposed to our principles, and realizing that back of every economic question lies a moral question, we cannot rightfully and conscientiously vote for parties seeking to enact them into law.

When we know that our neighbor is striving to do something that will cause great injury to another, if we aid him so to do we are ourselves guilty of the wrong. And when we know that political organizations are seeking to pass measures that will deprive their fellow-men of their natural heritage and debase them from free men into practical serfdom, still countenance and vote for their success, we are morally guilty of wrongdoing; conceding that some of the principles of one party may be a shade less objectionable than those of the other, yet even then its principles are still utterly bad. And if so, why should we vote for them? No one forces us to do so; we are free to organize a party based on the single tax, and to vote for what is right. Clearly this last is our only course; so long as there is a correct line of conduct open to a man, he cannot properly choose an immoral course because it gives better promise of success nor because it is easier to follow. Our present position involves

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NOW AS TO TAXATION

(Written for Henry George Edition of The Independent.)

In raising taxes or revenue the government, that is all of us, must keep the moral law.

Laws making for life are moral; laws making for death are immoral; but this may be too general a statement. Let's apply two accepted moral laws.

First—We must observe this, "Thou shalt not steal." In laying tax on personal property, on what any man has earned, for which he has given a definite part of his life, we rob him. If it is \$1 or \$100 so raised, he has lost it. It has been taken from him. Tax land values, which no man by his own effort created, and we do not rob him.

Second—"Lead us not into temptation." This is the prayer given for society. Now a personal tax does tempt men. We hand a paper to a man and say, "Fill it up and swear to its truth; if you are willing to perjure yourself you can pay less than if you tell the truth." Tax on land alone and land values does not require of a man his own valuation.

Now, so long as government raises revenue by violating these two fundamental moral laws, it is all the while making its people immoral to a greater or less extent.

Let us do justice and let us follow truth as a government. The single tax is ethical and moral. It will make for character. The present method rewards perjury and deceit. It (single tax) does not steal from any man any part of his own; it taxes only the land given by the Creator to all. It does not tempt men to lie. Why are taxes universally regarded as an evil, as a thing to get rid of and out of if possible? Men do not so regard office rent, nor house rent nor water rent, nor any other debts. Because it is not "for value received." But apply the single tax and men will gladly pay the tax or rent for use of the land which they will recognize belongs equally to all.

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the surrender of our convictions on every election day. It means that we must talk one way and vote another. That our whole political life must be a series of inconsistencies. That we must stand sponsor for all the vagaries that politicians adopt. That we must, like Peter deny his Master, abandon the right in each campaign to vote against what we know is morally wrong. This, in all kindness, savors of moral cowardice, and this will never win our battle. Besides, it is better to deserve success than to obtain it, better to be right than successful.

The writer understands the objections that will be urged. The misrepresentations to which such a party will be subjected, the difficulty of getting even good single taxers to break away from the party affiliations, and the probable opposition of most of our leaders. All this is true and it is to be regretted, but it should not deter us from doing what is right. Our cause is too grand to be gained by any save correct methods.

It will be said that we are not strong enough to organize, but this is not true as to the states of New York, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Texas, California, Washington, Delaware, and perhaps of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. In each of these states there are thousands of single taxers, and if any considerable number of these people will organize the greater part of the balance will be forced into the party by the abuse heaped upon it, and from these states the movement will gradually spread to others.

Believing this question vital to our cause the writer suggests that those in each state who feel that independent action is our moral duty take steps to form a nucleus around which single taxers can gather. The writer would be glad to hear from all who favor political organization, and may be of assistance in putting them into communication with others of this opinion. He also suggests that the matter be debated and discussed in the various single tax clubs of our country. E. T. WEEKS.

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Do not confuse land area with land value. Taxation is not of area, but of values. Values depend upon what others will pay for use of the land, of possible profits above wages. Farm lands are of large area and small value because they yield but little, if anything, above wages.—W. H. T. Wakefield.

"The real source of weakness in a reform movement is generally the class of cultivated men who, either through moral cowardice or a fatuous seeking after the reputation of amiability, refuse to stand out for what they know to be just.—Chicago Single Tax Club.

"White parasols and elephants mad with pride are the fruits of a grant of land," runs the old East Indian proverb. White parasols are there an emblem of high rank, and mad elephants of an irresponsible, dangerous power for evil. High rank and dangerous power belong to those with monopolized land values, especially of such valuable land as Baer's anthracite roads and mines, Rockefeller's oil fields, Vanderbilt's long, narrow strips called "rights of way." Pierpont Morgan's bank stands on land of which one acre will sell for more than all the land of the ten richest counties of Nebraska.—W. H. T. Wakefield.