

## Single Tax and Socialism

(Written for Henry George Edition of The Independent.)

Let me say at once, that I am not of those who look upon socialism as merely one of the vagaries of human aspiration—an utopian scheme framed in imagination and finding shelter in the minds of well meaning, but illogical people, whose exalted sympathies carry them beyond the dictates of reason, and lead them to indulge fanciful ideas of a social state in which the poverty, wretchedness and social injustice of existing society shall have an end.

There was a time when socialism was a mere nebulous notion, when in its aspiring weakness it pictured to itself lofty ideals, and followed fancies born within the enchanted castles of the brain. But that day is past. The socialism of today, as formulated by Marx and Lassalle, and advocated by the German school, is possessed of a scientific character, is based upon generally accepted doctrines of orthodox political economy, and boldly challenges its opponents to open encounter in the arena of scientific discussion.

From a vague ideal that for centuries flitted through the minds of men, tincturing the teachings of the fathers of the church and the sages of philosophy, it has developed into a theory armed with all the logic of the schools.

It has been asserted that the single tax is but a stepping stone to socialism, that to continue logically in the path of its principles is to emerge upon socialistic ground. No doubt to many persons having but a superficial knowledge of the scope and character of its aims and principles the single tax may appear to lead in such a direction, but in reality there is all the difference between them that there is between freedom and restriction—all the antagonism that there is between opposing forces in nature.

This may be made clear by briefly contrasting the principles of the two doctrines.

The theory which the great German socialist, Lassalle, borrowed from the English economists, and from which he drew all his deductions, is that theory which has been termed the "iron law" of wages, and which is briefly this: That the tendency of wages is the minimum necessary to existence and reproduction; that however wages may fluctuate, this is the point to which they inevitably tend.

This has been the accepted theory of political economists from Turgot to John Stuart Mill. That such is true under existing adjustments cannot be successfully denied, for however much wages may rise during an era of great invention and while we are wooing the virgin soil of a new continent, the ultimate and inevitable tendency is downward. It is this acceptance of doctrines of orthodox political economy as taught in the schools that gives to socialism its formidable character. It is the relentless logic which they apply to these tenets that wins for the socialistic theory such favor in cultivated minds. With faultless reasoning they show how the wage-earners pitted against each other in fierce competition, bid away a greater and greater share of what they produce, in exchange for the mere privilege of producing; resulting ultimately in the acceptance of a wage barely sufficient for their subsistence.

Regarding this law of wages to be as immutable as the laws which govern the physical universe, the socialists declare that in order to rescue the wage-earning class from its relentless force, all the means and instruments of production should be owned collectively, as being the only possible way in which labor can secure its full earnings, unimpaired by the profits of the capitalist or the exactions of the landlord. There are other arguments which the socialists advance in support of their program, but they are merely incidental to the theory and in no wise form any essential part of the basis upon which their scheme rests.

That socialism finds its great strength in current economic doctrines is evidenced by the fact that Leibknecht, a socialist leader of great intellectual ability, in addressing the socialist congress at Halle, took occasion to warn that body against countenancing measures that would tend to divert the movement from its economic basis. So long, he declared, as they adhered to that basis, they were impregnable; but that the hour they abandoned it, they were lost.

Now, the new political economy which we single tax men have espoused denies that this law of wages is a natural law, or is incapable of being altered. On the contrary it teaches that while this law may hold good under existing conditions, it is, nevertheless, the result of artificial adjustments upon which it is dependent.

If this so-called law of political economy, from which the deductions of socialism are drawn, merely expresses what is true under conditions which are the consequence of vicious legal enactments, what becomes of it when the restrictions which give rise to these conditions are removed? Is it not clear that the whole fabric must give way?

If it can be shown that the diminishing returns to labor result from the power which ownership of land gives, of appropriating a gradually increasing share of what labor produces, it is not evident that under a condition in which land owners are deprived of that power, that the "iron law" of wages will no longer hold good.

When we make clear that this law is true only under a condition that permits of the private appropriation of rent, we shatter the foundation upon which the whole structure of socialism rests, and when we show how, by a method both simple and feasible, economic rent may be restored to labor, thus giving to it the full unimpaired product of its exertion, the last vestige of the scientific basis of socialism is swept away.

The gist of the whole question lies in meeting this law of wages, and we claim that the single tax is a simpler, easier and more natural solution of the problem than the socialistic plan; that competition, under the conditions of real freedom established by the single tax, would become a natural and mutually beneficial form of co-operation.

Instead of competition being the demon which has its hand upon the throat of labor, as the socialists would have us believe, it is the private appropriation of rent, which, following in the wake of advancing production, swallows up all the increase in wealth which springs from the increase in skill and efficiency of labor, and the invention of labor saving machinery.

It is true there is competition, merciless competition among the disinherited, but it has no basis in nature. It springs from the restrictions which men have laid upon the bounties of nature, from the existence of social laws that rob humanity of its birthright, and send the masses of men forth into the world disinherited, and dependent upon the few for the privilege of toil.

But, says the socialist, why should the value of land be singled out for collective appropriation, and capital, machinery, the artificial factors of production, be allowed to remain in the hands of individuals? We answer, property in things which are the product of labor, and property in land, rest upon widely different principles.

That sacredness which attaches to property in the products of human labor, the fruits of human exertion, has never attached to property in land. We claim that what a man produces is justly his own, that his right to it springs from his ownership of himself. Man is a bundle of wants and desires, he is also a bundle of muscles, and nerves, adapted in their organization to produce the things necessary to supply those wants and desires. That which he draws forth, or produces from the storehouse of nature, through the instrumentality of the one, he has a right to apply to the satisfaction of the other. His right to it springs from his right to himself, and it should be his against all the world.

But no man made the land—it is the free gift of God, or nature, as you will—it was intended for man—not some men, or a few men, but for all men. It is the reservoir from which all wealth is drawn. Man himself springs from it, is nurtured by it, must live upon it, and without it cannot live at all. The right to land is as sacred as the right to existence itself. It is a common, equal and inalienable right, and cannot be bartered away by princes or parliaments.

Not only have all men an equal right to land, but it is also true that the value which attaches to land in civilized communities and which makes city lots worth thousands of dollars a front foot, attaches to it by reason of the growth of the community. It is a value which reflects the productiveness of aggregated labor. It is created by the community, and not by reason of any effort on the part of the individual owner, for we see that it attaches to land, often in the highest degree, upon which the owner has never done anything. The right of the community to this value rests upon the same principle as the right of the individual to what he produces—as having created it.

We carry the principle to the sacredness of private property, in its true forms, so far as to declare that what a man produces is his by so indefeasible a right that no government even can justly take from him one jot or tittle of it to defray the

expenses of the community, so long as there is a value created by the community, such as the value of land, which may be applied to that purpose.

This is why, in determining the right of the community to control the means of production, we distinguish between capital or property in the products of labor and property in land, and stand as the advocates of freedom as against restriction, and for the sovereignty of the individual in the sphere of individual action as against the sovereignty of the state.

J. B. SHARPE.

Pittsburg, Pa.

Why the single tax, why only one tax? The answer to this becomes plain as soon as one understands that we now pay two sets of taxes—one to public treasuries and another and much larger one to monopolies, the object of the single tax being to abolish the latter.—W. H. T. W.

### AN OVER SHADOWING CURSE

(Written for Henry George Edition of The Independent.)

California, the "Land of Sunshine," is unfortunately overshadowed with a curse that militates against the prosperity that could and would be enjoyed by its population, with a few exceptions.

I refer to the curse of landlordism. Or, in other words, land monopoly. And by the term land I mean all varieties of natural resources. Not only is the soil itself monopolized, but the water, the mineral deposits, the forests, the air and the sunshine are elements on which greedy eyes are fixed, and ruthless combinations of capital are used as if God had designed those essentials only for the strong and the greedy.

The earthlords do not monopolize sunshine and other natural elements by holding umbrellas over the heads of their victims. They do it by simply monopolizing land. This means that they can also control the other essential elements, and make fortunes by dealing in them as so much merchandise. This condition of affairs has been going on ever since California became a state, and the blighting effects of such a system are now visible on every hand. True, there are many families living here who enjoy all the comforts and many of the luxuries obtainable in this progressive age. But there are thousands of others who are hard pressed for even the ordinary necessities of life. Yet they work as steadily and strive as hard for a living as do their more fortunate fellow citizens. The wide difference between the conditions of the two classes is the result of permitting one man to grab natural resources and hold them for speculation, while scores of other people either directly or indirectly pay toll to the monopolizers.

Our laws, which are supposed to be made for the good of all the people alike, uphold land monopoly in all its varied forms, and all other monopolies that seriously oppress wealth-producers are buttressed by the monopoly of land.

At every election the intelligent idiot who prides himself on being an independent voter, walks up to the polls and automatically drops in a ballot to further tighten the chains of industrial slavery on himself and his fellow imbeciles. Then, between voting days, he wonders why it is that with all his hard work and rigid economy so little cash comes into his pocket and so little sunshine into his life.

I often feel like asking the automatic voter how it would do for him to find out what he is really voting for; but that would necessitate his doing a little independent thinking—which is not in his line.

Land monopoly is not a personal matter; it is an institutional evil, a national curse, a far-reaching octopus, and in order to expel it from a community, a county or a state a majority of the voters—legal voters, I mean—there must be concert of action, coupled with sufficient moral courage to do what reason and conscience pronounce right. The people can have such legislation as they desire, if they will demand it. One of the worst drawbacks to the betterment of our social conditions is lack of moral courage among men who know that a change is needed. Single taxers, however, pause not to inquire whether our principles are popular or unpopular, here or there. They are constantly inspired by the principle outlined by the poet, who wrote these words:

"He's a slave who dare not speak  
For the fallen and the weak;  
He's a slave who dare not be  
In the right with two or three."

RALPH HOYT.

Los Angeles, Cal.

## TRUSTS GOING OUT OF BUSINESS

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Professor Waite, in charge of the "true wealth" investigation of census of 1890, says he found that "really, truly" farmers—farmers who farm land—owned less than 6 per cent of the nation's wealth, but was told by Commissioner Porter that the republican party managers said it would never do to publish this fact, as the farmers were already a little off in the west—that he must increase it to 20 per cent. Refusing to be a party to this deception, Waite resigned and another man made the change. Thomas G. Shearman's iron-clad figures and other investigations show that farmers now pay at least 68 per cent of all national, state and local taxation. As producers and consumers without a monopoly the incidence of taxation is shifted to their shoulders. Under the single tax farmers would pay only in proportion to their land values—about 5 or 6 per cent—instead of 68.—W. H. T. Wakefield.

As a measure looking to universal peace I would do away with all tariff taxes, I would abolish private ownership of land; so that trade, land, and men, might be free!—William Riley, Boyd.