

## The Philosophy of Freedom

An Open Forum for Single Taxers

True government secures to each man his earnings, so no government is true that permits land monopoly.

### MANSKLIGHETEN.

Rev. August Dellgren, one of the contributors to the Henry George Edition, writes that he is the publisher of a Swedish single tax paper, "Manskligheten" (Humanity), established in 1889, and published monthly at 620 Seventh st. south, Minneapolis, Minn. The Independent is glad to exchange with Manskligheten, and advises any of its readers who understand the Swedish language to send 40 cents to Mr. Dellgren for a year's subscription.

I would not only see homes free from attachment for debt, but free from taxation also.—Robert G. Ingersoll.

### THE IRISH LAND BILL.

The full significance of Mr. Wyndham's Irish land bill is not generally understood on this side of the Atlantic. The following may throw a little sidelight upon this latest effort to conciliate the Irish people. The British Isles are a landlord-ridden country. Less than 500 men own over one-half of England and Wales. Twenty-four men own one-fourth of Scotland. A few hundred men own the greater part of Ireland. Two-thirds of Great Britain and Ireland is owned by 12,489 persons. Forty million Britishers who proudly sing "Britons Never Shall Be Slaves" pay tribute to these 12,489 owners of their country for the privilege of drawing their breath on the soil of their native land.

In 1880 a California friend of Henry George, after trying vainly to find a publisher for "Progress and Poverty" in England, left several copies of the American edition of that book with a London bookseller, whose patrons numbered most of the "cranks" and investigators of the metropolis. Soon a popular six-penny edition was published, and the demand for the book ran 60,000 copies a year. In every highway and byway in England renewed hope sprang up in the breasts of Anglo-Saxons to recover their lost heritage from the descendants of the courtiers of the Norman bastard despoiler.

In 1889 Henry George visited the country and created a profound impression. In 1895 the liberal party demanded in its Newcastle program, the taxation of land values. Over 300 taxing bodies, including the cities of London, Glasgow and Liverpool, petitioned parliament for power to tax land values for local purposes. Fifty out of seventy-five members elected to the Glasgow city council were returned pledged to this reform. The Scottish liberals made it their first demand. The radical federation of London, 100,000 strong, also demanded it. In 1898 the liberals, by nominating Henry George men, made almost a clean sweep of the by-elections. When parliament opened four years ago an amendment to the speech from the throne demanding taxation of land values reduced the normal tory majority of 140 to 34.

The ministry was thunderstruck at the phenomenal growth of such a revolutionary idea. Something had to be done, and at once, to avert the public mind. A quarrel was picked with Oom Paul Kruger. The Boer war followed. Its cost had not been counted. The additional burden of a billion dollars staggered the British taxpayer and the war will prove a boomerang to the tory landlords.

Last October delegates representing 124 municipalities and boroughs met in convention in Glasgow and unanimously demanded the taxation of land values, and with only two or three dissenting votes demanded immediate political action. A month later 500 delegates representing the principal advanced reform bodies of the kingdom met at Newcastle-on-Tyne and adopted the same demands. A little diversion was created in Venezuelan waters. The public having in mind the recent South African war failed to respond. Then Mr. Wyndham brought in his Irish land purchase act. The object is to seduce the Irish party from the liberal alliance; then appeal to the country and get another seven years' lease of power.

Michael Davitt, Henry George's foremost Irish lieutenant, declares that the Irish landlords are to receive 50 per cent more for their land than it would bring in the open market. With the Irish landlords well cared for, exchanging their precarious land titles for consols, with a 50 per cent bounty added, with the Irish people

selling their birthright for a mess of pottage, the English and Scottish tory landlords hope to postpone the evil day, perhaps long enough to enable them to unload at least a part of their holdings—perhaps partly to American syndicates. The recent startling liberal victories in the by-election and the still more recent test vote on the taxation of land values, whereby the normal ministerial majority of 140 was reduced to 13, was the liberal answer to the tory Irish land bill.

A. FREELAND.

Mt. Pleasant, Tenn.

The single tax means the right to produce for yourself, and the right to enjoy the whole product.

### REPLIES TO FERGUSON.

Editor Independent: E. W. Ferguson, jr., has wrought havoc (?) in the single tax ranks by his pungent (?) criticisms of their philosophy, as printed in the last issue of The Independent.

With seven-tenths of the most productive land held out of use by speculators, or in the support of monopoly, is it any wonder that "the least productive land in use will barely sustain the animal wants?" Now, then, do we but make this seven-tenths accessible, by taxing away its speculative value, the "rent line" "will come away up and sit down, in the lap of luxury." This would indeed "reduce the farmer" to the condition of "metayers or cottiers." To go farther and remove the taxes that now hamper trade and industry, taking values that the people collectively create to pay the bills that the people collectively contract, we will, according to Mr. Ferguson, "accomplish what generations of misrule has not quite accomplished." "The backbone of the nation will be broken" (when it straightens up). Again, "by reducing the governmental expense" and "by confiscating rent for governmental purposes" thus creating a "wonderful revenue,"—enabling nation, state and municipality to get out of, and keep out of, debt; we will thereby breed an "officeholding aristocracy," and "make a long strike toward absolutism."

It is impossible to cope with such logic. Furthermore, Mr. Ferguson points out that "unimproved values" are like Macbeth's dagger. "There's no such thing." Evidently all our efforts to direct attention to that quality as the proper object of taxation are vain and childish. Finally, he says, "the people will continue the vicious in power" and such an "arbitrary institution as a government that insures "equal rights to all and special privileges to none," with an equitable and natural system of taxation, is not what Mr. Ferguson wants, he has "a model government" scheme of his own.

With compliments to Hartington, Neb. E. O. BAILEY.  
Central City, Colo.

Draining a frog-pond near a town will improve sanitary conditions, but will it in the town raise wages or rent?

### SUGGESTIONS FROM A SUBURBANITE.

"I have a complaint to make," said I to my friend, a city official. "In rainy weather our sidewalk is so deep under water that there is no using it." "It is impossible," he replied, "to keep the suburbs in proper condition, scattered as they are over such a large territory. If it were not for land speculation, the suburban homes of a city would be clustered close about and repairs could be made much more economically than at present."

Would not houses be cheaper for the same reason? Good roads and short distances make home-building easier.

My neighbor's house is almost entirely surrounded by vacant land, which, though an attractive and convenient site for residences, is planted every year to potatoes and corn. To reach his home from the city, he passes a number of similar holdings, but he little thinks that, for the profit of this "vacant lot industry," his daily ride is prolonged and the expense of his house and lot increased.

"I have read Progress and Poverty," he said, one day, "but I see no evidences of land monopoly."

The vexations of the suburbanite are a never-failing source of amusement, but even the man who wheels a baby-carriage is less pitiable than he who does not recognize the active signs of that greatest curse to civilization—land monopoly.

The advertisement of a real estate

company has lately appeared on the cover of a well-known weekly. Its most prominent feature is a picture of Russell Sage—an ideal head of success, as it were—with his prophecy of the rapid growth of New York city and the advice to young men to invest in land in the outlying boroughs. His words, "Your real estate will make your old age comfortable," may be translated, "The presence of an increasing population will enhance the value of your land to such a degree that in time you can reap a fortune without having earned it."

This is what land monopoly means—the taking by individuals, through land ownership, of wealth created by others. And how simple the remedy:—to tax this unearned value into the common treasury.

"It is a shame," said the Philosopher to the Legislator, "that all this land should be lying unused, while not far away there are thousands of families crowded together in a way that forbids healthful living."

"I will pass a law compelling the owners of vacant land to improve it," said the Legislator.

Time passed. The land was still vacant, but there was a board fence around it, plastered with bills.

"That is not the improvement I meant," said the Legislator, sadly. "I will pass a law that tenements shall be supplied with the most improved plumbing."

It was done; but the landlords raised the rent and their tenants were obliged to take boarders in order to pay it; so they were no better off than before.

The Legislator was in despair.

"This reminds me of the Fable in which the wind and the sun try to make a man take off his coat," said the Philosopher. "You have tried and failed, now I will put into practice the simple law that land values belong to all, and are the natural revenue for the expenses of the community."

So he removed all taxes from improvements and taxed all land according to its value, whether it was in use or not. As a result, much land was put upon the market that had been held at exorbitant prices before. Everywhere new houses were built and no one feared to build handsomely, for industry would not be fined. Those who did not want to move to the suburbs with their neighbors had plenty of room in the city. Their landlords soon found that the demand for poor tenements at high rents was gone and they were obliged to make many more improvements and reduce the rent. In consequence, they did not make so much money; but the sum total of happiness was even greater than the Philosopher had hoped.

ALICE CARPENTER.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

The earth belongs in usufruct to the living; the dead have no right or power over it.—Thomas Jefferson.

### THE SINGLE TAX A BLESSING.

By the single tax, we mean the abolition of taxes upon everything, save and except a tax upon the value of land, irrespective of the improvements thereon. This would abolish the personal tax, the occupation tax, the tax upon houses or any product of labor, hence, there would be no more tariff taxes to increase the cost of products which we all consume. Not having any more tariff taxes, food and other products of labor would be cheaper to the extent of the tariff tax, which is always added to the cost of the article imported and paid by the consumer. Even the home manufacturer always sets the price of his product as high as the imported article sells for. This causes us to pay the tariff, whether we buy imported products or not. The application of the single tax would make land cheaper, enabling poor people to buy a building lot with less money, therefore, getting a home without having to work a life time for it. The reason for this is, that if the value of land alone is taxed, the rate of taxation or the per cent on the dollar of valuation will be greater, so as to produce the same amount of money that would be raised by the present unequal system of taxation; therefore, the owner of a vacant lot would have to pay a larger tax. This tax would finally be nearly, if not fully, equal to the rental value of the lot. The owner would not let it remain idle long if the increase in value were taken by the government every year by the single tax. The same fate would overtake many thousand of owners of vacant lots. Those who had the money would build houses and thus receive a revenue. Those who had not the money would offer their lots for sale. This would produce competition among vacant lot owners to secure purchasers. There would soon be more vacant lots offered for sale, than there were people with money to buy. Inasmuch as

competition in business reduces the prices of products, so the competition of vacant lot owners to sell their lots would reduce the price of vacant lots. The price would fall until it would reach the point where people could buy; that's how you would get cheaper land.

The building upon vacant lots would increase the demand for workmen. Now, there are more workmen than jobs, and wages are low; in the other case, the increased activity in building would make more jobs than workmen, causing the land owners to bid a higher price for mechanics. Result—wages would rise. This condition would give us two great benefits, cheap lands and higher wages. No one will deny that this condition is beneficial to the majority of people. It would place the workmen in a position, not only to get a home earlier in life, but steady employment at better wages, would enable him to educate his children, instead of sending them to the factory before they were fully developed.

Under present conditions about 10 per cent of the population own all the land—under the single tax about 90 per cent would be land owners. Consider both conditions, and you must admit that the single tax would be a blessing.

J. J. PASTORIZA.

Houston, Tex.

Taxing things that can be hidden makes sneaks and liars. The single tax has no place for spies and informers.

### COMPARATIVE LAND VALUES.

An able statistician, one in position to know facts from most recent and reliable sources, lately wrote in a metropolitan paper:

"The wealth of the United States is now worth about one hundred and ten billions, of which ten billions certainly and probably twenty billions represent only spurious values, or watered stock, paying dividends. Of this vast sum the share owned by farmers, including their land, improvements, and all forms of personal property, is rather under than over three billions. From this must be deducted mortgages and other indebtedness and much valuable suburban, mineral, forest, and other lands listed as farm land, but too valuable to use as such and not owned by farmers, as well as many millions of acres owned by home and foreign millionaires, speculators, railways, banks, loan companies, etc."

It will be remembered that the president of the steel trust, in his testimony before the senate industrial inquiry committee, when asked why his corporation was capitalized at a billion four hundred million when they had bought all their property for \$304,000,000, said the difference lay in the enhanced value of their lands and terminal facilities, that the trust owned 60,000 acres Connellsville coal lands worth \$60,000 per acre. Examination of the county records showed this coal land to be assessed as farm land as an average of less than \$25 per acre. He also said that ore lands were equally valuable, but these show even a much lower value for assessment, averaging about \$10 per acre. He was right about the lands' real value now, though it originally cost but a trifle.

The anthracite coal lands of Pennsylvania are worth ten to fifty thousand dollars per acre and are assessed at from ten to thirty dollars.

Farmers seldom realize the enormous city land values, as compared to farm land value. There are less than a dozen of the forty-five states which have not a single city in which the land values (bare land, remember) do not exceed the entire farm values of that state, and there is no state in which its two largest cities have not a greater land value than all its farms. New York city land values are seven times the state's farm values; Chicago more than five times that of Illinois; Cincinnati and Cleveland seven times of Ohio, etc.

Farmers must realize how slight is their own share of the nation's land values before they can understand the effect of the single tax in shifting taxation from the cheap lands of the country to the dear ones of the cities and to mining and forest lands, terminal rights of way and other monopolistic values, and from "labor" to monopoly.

Mound City, Kas.

W. H. T. WAKEFIELD.

The pirate tries to get a crop without raising a crop; the speculator does the same; where's the difference?

The democratic state central committee is called to meet at the Lincoln hotel, Lincoln, Neb., June 23, 1903, at 2 o'clock p. m. to fix time and place for holding a state convention.