What is the Single Tax?

By WILL ATKINSON

Tax Monopoly, stop taxing Industry.
Tax the speculator, stop taxing the home builder.
Take in taxes only the values the community creates and leave to every man all he creates with hand or brain.
That is the single tax.
Tax vacant lots, stop taxing homes; tax stumps, stop taxing cows.

TO TAX IS TO DESTROY.
Let us stop taxing the good things we want and tax only the evil things we want to get rid of.
Stop taxing homes, factories and farms and tax monopoly, special privilege, speculation, forestalling land, and congested wealth. If dogs are too numerous, we tax dogs, if chicken thieves abound we tax them, but let us stop making it a greater crime to build a chicken house than to rob one.
Today a chicken thief is fined once but the builder is fined every year.

Our tax laws make it a crime for a man to paint his house.
We say a married man and a man with children are better citizens than bachelors, but we punish a man for marrying in increased taxes and the more children he has the higher his taxes.
We call honesty, industry, thrift and enterprise virtues and then punish them in taxes as if they were crimes.

We say we want a city of homes and then punish every man who builds a home as if he were a criminal, and at the same time we exempt from taxes the dogs in the manger who hold land idle and so prevent all building so far as they can.
We say we want factories but we penalize the men who bring them.

Every lot idle in the city, every acre withheld from use by land speculators in the country, is barring men willing to work from natural opportunities to work and so feeds slums, brothels and prisons.

We tax farmers to death. Try taxing the speculator a while.
Our present tax laws are neither moral nor Christian. They take by force men's individual earnings; give the dishonest advantages over the honest; corrupt government; promote perjury; cripple commerce; lessen the production of wealth and enrich the few while
impoverying the many. Where population is sparse land has no value and there is no need for taxes. As population increases the need for government arises and with that need there automatically attaches to land a value which grows as grows the need for taxes.

This value no individual creates, but all contribute to it.

Every increase in population adds to it, the arrival of every immigrant, the birth of every child, and these additions also add to the common needs for water, police, transportation.

In a growing community a better water supply, paving, fire protection all add to land values, but the value of things made by labor tends to decrease.

Our refusal to take these values for the community which are created by the community, and our giving them to those who do not make them, is what creates millionaires surfeited with unearned wealth and men and women driven by abject poverty to crime.

Seattle fought to abolish a restricted district and to free white slaves. Our present tax system creates white slaves and restricted districts, impoverishes men so they cannot maintain homes and forces women to sell their souls for bread.

Vancouver adopted the single tax for local purposes in Jan., 1910. In 1910 as compared with 1909 building fell off in Spokane 16%, in Seattle 20%, and in Tacoma 24%; but at the same time it increased in Vancouver 86%, under the stimulus of the single tax.

Building permits in Vancouver in March, 1911, were $1,147,000. In May, 1911, they were $2,500,000. It has drawn to Vancouver men and money from all over the world and drained the neighboring cities, Victoria and New Westminster, so that they were compelled in self defense to adopt it.

Portland is certain to adopt it next year. With cities on both the south and north exempting capital and industry from taxation what chance has Seattle to attract factories unless we stop fining them for coming and decide to tax only monopoly and speculation.

Tax land values only, proclaim to the world that every man is free here to work, to build and to save without being fined for it and Seattle will be advertised without cost to the ends of the earth; men, money and factories will flow here and help us build a greater, fairer, more beautiful Seattle. A Seattle without slums or white slaves, with few millionaires, probably, but with no paupers and no idle men.

A Seattle where every man will work and get his full earnings, where every woman will be queen of her own home, where monopoly and special privilege will be abolished and all enjoy equal opportunity, where vice and crime will vanish with the abject poverty which breeds them.

That is what the single tax means to Seattle.
"FC. FREEDOM."

Passing from the lighter vein, more weighty of purpose and power, we find the verses of Mr. Will Atkinson, published by the Metropolitan Press, Seattle. Mr. Atkinson calls his book "For Freedom," and the contents are frankly in the spirit of revolt. The author rises to his heights in replying to Mr. Kipling's conservative "Sons of Martha" and the "White Man's Burden," in his two poems called "The Sons of Toil" and "Climb Down." The latter especially with its refrain, "When we get off the other man's back," is a vigorous slogan. Mr. Atkinson has courage and a knowledge of the rhyming craft; his book should prove inspiring to the large class of those who revere, "The words of God's great seer to-day, our martyred Henry George."—"Mirror," St. Louis, Mo.

"FOR FREEDOM."

The poets have always been dangerous fellows. Their lilting rhymes often conceal social dynamite, and the rhymesters have sometimes defied argument, denunciation and other attack. Will Atkinson's verses are not great poetry but his lines have virility, clearness and ideality. He is not content to sing of conventional themes, soft lights upon the hillside, the lily's white chalice, or honeyed words of love. He sings of social wrongs and social remedies. He does not touch the lyre's golden strings; he blows a trumpet summoning to the battle. He answers Kipling's "Sons of Martha," takes Ambrose Bierce to task, and declares in vigorous language that St. Patrick's message to the world is that "there is no hope for labor til ye reclaim earth's soil." You will hear Will Atkinson's poems quoted in reform meetings for many years to come.—"Herald," Los Angeles, Calif.

"FOR FREEDOM."

For Freedom. By Will Atkinson. Ornamental flexible leather. Pp. 86. Published by the author, P. O. Box 746, Seattle, Wash. Price $1.00; paper, 50c. This little volume breathes the spirit of democracy and is instinct with the passion for justice and human rights which dominated the imagination of the fathers and which again in these latter days is manifesting itself in state, in literature and in the action of the electorate. The power of the author of this little volume of verse lies in his message as a preacher of righteousness or an apostle of justice, rather than in the imaginative flights and rhythmic sweep of his lines; but we know of no verse-maker of recent years who has embodied the Single Tax land theory in such clear and vigorous verse as has Mr. Atkinson, and his poems are well calculated to break the moral and mental stupor that has so long bound the people.—"Twentieth Century Magazine." Boston, Mass.
A small dainty volume of poems has come to us from across the seas from Will Atkinson, evidently an ardent and convinced single taxer. From time to time we hope to find space for some of his verses in our columns; here we can do little more than gratefully acknowledge them. Most of them are animated and pervaded by the single tax philosophy, and many of the lines will linger long in the memory of every single taxer privileged to read them. Thus this reminder that “God’s laws are for eternity! Men’s laws may be repealed” is one that will specially appeal to them. Nor does Mr. Atkinson leave us in doubt as to what laws of men specially need repealing; for on another page he warns his own country that Freedom’s Call to her is not to ape the War Lords of Europe, but to

Sweep, sweep away the barriers
That bar men from God’s soil!
Give to all their heritage,
The full fruits of their toil!

Then shall earth’s sore oppressed
Take heart of hope again!
And bless the starry banner
Which out of slaves makes men!

The poems on “St. Patrick’s Gospel,” “Give Ye His Due to Caesar,” “Freedom’s Call,” “Prayer,” and “Tyranny or Liberty” are, perhaps, the best in the book. Finally, we feel assured that our readers will appreciate Mr. Atkinson’s philosophic views of prayer, as expressed in the following verses:

Prayer is the work our busy hands have wrought,
Not the weak words our lips have feebly said:
Prayer is the act that bane or blessing brought;
Words without deeds are profitless and dead.

Would you pray truly? Break the barriers down
That fence earth’s soil from hungry toiler’s needs.
Fear neither human law, nor human frown
That mock God’s laws. Prayers are not words, but deeds.


“FOR FREEDOM.”

We tardily but with thanks, acknowledge receipt of a beautiful little volume entitled “For Freedom” being a compilation of poems by Will Atkinson, well-known as a writer of poems with freedom as their theme. A number of these have been given in these columns and it will be our pleasure with the author’s kind permission to reprint others from time to time.—“Courier,” Fairhope, Alabama.