

WHAT IS THE SINGLE TAX?

This definition of the Single Tax is reproduced from the **SINGLE TAX REVIEW** for July-August 1909. It is from the pen of Daniel Kiefer, Chairman of the Fels Fund Commission.

Adam Smith in his "Wealth of Nations" referred to the absence of want in what were then the British Colonies of North America. He also showed the cause of this state of affairs. He said it was due to the easy access the colonists had to the vast natural resources of the country.

These same natural resources exist today and on account of progress in invention, and increase of population, are capable of far greater productivity than in Adam Smith's time. But the workers no longer have the easy access they once had because the land has almost entirely become private property.

The contrast between the distribution of wealth among us today and what it was when the country was still new may be shown by the testimony of many others besides Adam Smith. It all clearly shows land monopoly to be the main cause of poverty and all its resulting evils.

The way to cure an evil is to remove its cause. Poverty can be abolished by destroying its cause—land monopoly—and the Single Tax is the easiest method by which this result can be accomplished. The public appropriation of ground rent will secure the common right of all men to the use of the earth even though existing legal titles be not disturbed. A tax on land values equal to the annual rental value is all that is necessary to make land for all practical purposes common property. At the same time, the abolition of all other forms of taxation would remove another obstruction to industry. The abolition of these taxes, leaving the tax on land values the only one for the raising of all public revenues, is what we mean by the Single Tax.

With the Single Tax in operation the owner of unused or only partially used land would find himself put to heavy expense for the pleasure of claiming title to certain parts of the earth's surface. If he could not or would not make this title a means of giving him enough revenue to pay the tax, he would in all probability drop it and leave the land to some one who both would and could make it sufficiently productive to pay the tax.

Besides making natural opportunities accessible to labor, the Single Tax would be fatal to all the trusts and monopolies that depend either on land monopoly or some form of unjust taxation for support. When it is borne in mind that under it there will be neither protective tariff nor revenue tariff; that there will be no internal revenue duties; no local or State taxes, either direct or indirect on industry or its products, it should be easy to see that the trusts now fostered by one or more of these forms of special privilege will have lost their power to monopolize the industries they now control.

The Single Tax is, in short, the most practical method of social redemption.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTES.

BEGINNING with this issue the pages of the REVIEW will be numbered consecutively for the yearly volume. And with the final number of the year a title page and index for binding will be printed.

WE have still on hand hundreds of copies of the Vancouver, British, N. Y. City and other Special Numbers. These are admirably adapted for propaganda, and will be furnished in quantities, postpaid, at ten cents a copy.

OUR readers are asked to note announcement on back pages, of the forthcoming SINGLE TAX YEAR BOOK. Send for subscription blanks for circulation among your friends and fellow Single Taxers. Help us to make this enterprise a signal success from the start. Particulars of the progress of the work will be printed in each issue of the REVIEW.

SINGLE TAXERS AND PUBLIC OFFICE.

We have been called to task for our attitude toward Single Taxers seeking public office. Let us not be misunderstood. We dispute no man's right to serve the public or his

own interest in any of the five or six parties which furnish harmless activities to the American people and entertainment to the angels. A man's livelihood is his own, and he is as much justified in seeking it in this way as in any other. Nor is his consequent silence imposed by his political obligations a fair subject for public criticism. In this, too, he should be free. For political salaries from \$5,000 to \$17,500 are only to be obtained by the sacrifice of some part of a man's most cherished convictions, and of the need of such sacrifice we are not the best judges. Nor are we under any bounden duty to hale him before a court on indictment based on a more or less altruistic view of the relation of a man's political conduct to his ethical concept, or some earlier confession of faith. All this we concede to the objectors to our objections.

But they leave untouched this more vital consideration. Single Taxers are fighting for a great principle—a principle to which the individual must be subordinated. A Single Taxer running for office on a non-Single Tax issue should no more interest us than some political contest for justice of the peace in Kamshatka. His political fortunes are of no more concern to us than his successful elevation to a position of responsibility in some department store. Yet Single Taxers on hearing of such nomination band themselves together, send out speakers, solicit funds and divert their energies from direct activities for the Single Tax to electing a fellow Single Taxer to office.

What follows? For the most part, so many years of silence on the part of the successful nominee. A voice or pen lost temporarily, maybe permanently, to the movement. Our memory at the moment goes back to a brilliant member of the legislature of a certain State, who was several times reelected. He had been a Single Taxer, active with tongue and pen. We waited impatiently for him to do something, for he had influence and force of personality. He would tell us in a stage whisper that times were not yet ripe for the doing of something for the Single Tax. They never got ripe during his term.

Our point is that we have no right to criticize or condemn such a man. As he

was not elected on a Single Tax issue he was not called upon to make it an issue. It is easy to argue, and idle to deny, that his responsibility was to those who had elected him, and to the platform on which he stood. But we had worked so hard for his election.

It was this reply in substance if not in words that Justice Seabury made in perfect good nature to our statement at a recent dinner that we had been too busy electing Single Taxers to office who in office were, so far as the Single Tax is concerned, relegated to obscurity.

The defence of the Justice was sound. Unless candidates are elected on a Single Tax issue their responsibility is to others than Single Taxers.

THE DEATH OF DUKE PROSPER.

The death in Brussels a few weeks ago of Duke Prosper of Arenberg seems to call attention anew to some of the curiosities of our economic system. The Arenbergs were the spoiled darlings of our land system. The mineral rights in Westphalia in possession of the family were confirmed by the Emperor Charles IV. away back in 1358, and royalties from these holdings have been paid the family for ten centuries. But at no time have they increased so rapidly as in the last two decades.

Duke Prosper was a degenerate and was convicted of a peculiarly revolting murder years ago, and sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude, which his rank and influence enabled him to escape.

Think with what arguments this noble family would resist the taking of these royalties by public taxation. Wouldn't they argue something like this: "For ten centuries our family has rested secure in the belief that the law which has recognized our right to these royalties, confirmed by act of the Emperor Charles IV., would not be rudely abrogated. Under the sanction of this law these holdings have been wisely 'administered' by our family; numbers of humble and deserving workmen with families have made their living by extracting the ores; why its very age constitutes an

argument for the excellence of the institution of Arenberg rights to these Westphalian mineral royalties. It is true these mines have grown in value since the time of Charles, but so has everything else that has survived his reign—paintings, missals, cathedrals. It would have been all right if we had begun that way, and no doubt in a new community the Single Tax would be practicable, but,—etc., etc."

So would the Arenbergs "reason" and their reasoning would be just as valid in their mouths as in those of the Astors.

IN MEMORIAM—THE PERFECT LANDLORD.

We made no mention in our last issue of the death of John G. Wendel, landowner, second only to the Astors as a holder of New York real estate. Unconsciously, he was a silent apostle of the great cause of the entire absorption of land value by taxation for public use. While others have been obliged to content themselves with mere verbal advocacy of this belief, he conducted his affairs so as to be a living testimony to the truth of the doctrine that we champion.

Confident in the legal rights over his vast estate, and the publicly created values attached thereto, which our land system vested in him, he had no patience with the weak spirit of truckling to public opinion, which many of his landowning brethren betray. His land was *his*, to do with as he pleased, and no sickly sentimentality dimmed his view of his relation to his fellows. No idea that he was a trustee for the Almighty to dispense His blessings on the poor and lowly ever entered his head. He was in some sense a hero of a lost or losing cause—lost because the common sense of the future will not long tolerate a legal fiction which converts the product of the labor of millions into the private property of the few.

Mr. Wendel belonged to a generation of men who had no more doubts of their right to do this than had the planter as to his right to own, buy, sell and breed slaves, under the cruder, if less efficient system of chattel slavery, which preceded the indus-