

# THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

A Record of the Progress of Single Tax and Tax Reform  
Throughout the World.

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## THE APPROACH TO UTOPIA

*(For the Review.)*

By **ALEX. MACKENDRICK**

The impulse to construct Utopias is perhaps one of the most deeply-rooted among human instincts. In all ages the mind of man has wandered in dreams and reached out to visionary ideals of Golden-ages in which the evils of life as we know them shall exist no more, and where the cosmic strife shall be finally suspended. Nor need the educative value of this tendency to aerial city building be lightly esteemed. Whatever is true in the Lamarckian theory of the development of animal characteristics by the efforts to climb, to jump, or to reach to unattainable fruits on high trees, may be applicable to men's attempts to construct ideal polities. It may be that by constant straining after the ideal, the organs and faculties by which the ideal may be reached are ultimately evolved.

The difficulty about all the Utopias that have taken shape in men's minds, is that there has seemed no thinkable passage from the actual to the ideal, from what is to what ought to be. The gulf fixed between the world of fact and the world of dream has always been too wide for the human imagination to bridge. We have not been able to visualize the perfect community as growing out of the present by the gradual and constant operation of forces now in action, or of forces yet to be liberated. And it is here that the incapacity of the human imagination is manifested. Herbert Spencer pictures a man of wealth in the middle ages, who, to protect his riches had to live in a house with thick walls and barred windows, with iron-studded doors, with moats and draw-bridges, and armed sentinels. Had such a man, Spencer suggests, been informed that in a few centuries a rich man might live in an unprotected house in the middle of a park, with no thick walls nor barred windows, no moats nor bridges, no armed watchmen, and with no emblem of his wealth and power other than a talisman in his coat pocket called a cheque-book; such a man would probably have dismissed the prophesy as

the wildest of dreams, his imagination being unequal to the task of visualizing the process by which the tendencies then in operation could lead to the conceived-of state. The difficulty always is, that of seeing how the ideal can grow out of the actual; how the principle of conservation and the instinct to "create all things new" can be reconciled. The difficulty, indeed, is at bottom the biological one of imagining (in advance of observation and experience) how the child can become a man. It is the difficulty of realizing with Tennyson that "Wildest dreams are but the needful preludes of the truth; for me the genial day, the happy crowd, the sport half-science, fill me with a faith that this fine world of ours is but a child yet in its go-cart; give it time to learn its limbs, there is a hand that guides."

The dictum will be generally admitted, that the history of human progress has been mainly the record of the gradual curtailment of special privileges and the corresponding enlargement of general rights and liberties. In the early stages of civilization, despotic power and privilege were at a maximum, and general liberties at a minimum. Men had not freedom to think their own thoughts, still less to utter them, still less again to publish them abroad, and least of all freedom of control for their own actions. One by one these forms of freedom have been wrested from the holders of power, and the value of life to the world at large has been incalculably increased. We now breathe the air of free speculation on the deepest problems of life without permission of Church or State. We may utter our thoughts or publish them abroad as we please, so long as our neighbors are not made to suffer in safety or reputation. We are free to move from place to place, and our actions are within our own control to an extent of which our ancestors little dreamed. And it is these forms of freedom partial and incomplete as they are, that have given to our social life such value as it possesses, and to defend which is the instinct which is now bracing the youth of Britain to a heroic endurance and self-sacrifice which no external force could ever have evoked.

But the last entrenchment in the capture of our liberties yet remains to be won. We are not free (except at the dictation of the privileged) to earn our livings in the only way in which livings can be earned, by the application of our labor to the source of all wealth, the land. If proof of this were required, one need only point to the masses of unemployed men in times of so-called peace and prosperity; to the acres of unused land where livings might be earned; and to the numbers of factory-workers, distributive laborers, and purveyors of instruction and amusement; all ready and anxious to exchange services with those unemployed who might be engaged in producing the goods wherewith to effect these exchanges. Now, it is surely obvious that so long as this last restriction on our liberty of action remains, it is a misuse of language to call ourselves a free people. Highly as we value the forms of freedom we do enjoy, we recognize that it is the freedom to earn livings that must ultimately determine the value of all other liberties. If the revolt against military domination which is supposed to be the justification

for the sacrifices now being made on the Continent of Europe, does not reveal the necessity for revolt against this last obstacle to freedom, destiny will have taught us an expensive lesson in vain. For the only absolute guarantee of a permanent peace will be found in a nation which is free from the base upwards, and in which the people have liberty to earn their livings where, when, and how they please, so long as they do not infringe the equal liberty of others.

And it is here that the use of the imagination may help us to foresee the process by which the present wasteful, immoral, and chaotic scramble which we call our industrial "system" may evolve into a rational, moral and orderly system of human relationships. All the economic evils we suffer from at present (and these are the parents of most of the physical, intellectual and moral diseases of society) can be traced to the fact of the perpetual competition for livelihoods of the comparatively small margin of unemployed men who wait around the gates of our docks and factories. This small margin of unemployed is the force that creates and maintains that downward tendency in the remuneration of human service which economists recognize as a constant factor in the science of economics. If this constant margin of unemployed were removed by the opening of opportunities now kept closed by privileged classes and by those who are encouraged by our taxation system to anticipate the growth of communities and speculate on their future necessities, this downward tendency would at once cease. Just as the price of coals rises when the supply decreases, so the remuneration of labor would advance as soon as the supply was ever so slightly short of the demand. Every merchant knows that the price at which the last parcel of goods is placed upon the market determines the price that will be obtainable for those already in store; and that if no new supplies are forthcoming an increased price for stock in hand can be commanded—an increase which is limited only by the needs or desires of the community. If therefore this last and final rampart of the citadel of privilege were broken and men had this basic freedom to apply their labor where it primarily belongs, to the land which is the source of all wealth, this menacing margin of competitors for livings would disappear. The natural tendency of wages to a maximum would then assert itself, and new forces would certainly be liberated which would mark the beginning of that transformation in human affairs of which we have dreamed so long.

Can any who have followed us thus far, and who have brought to the consideration of this question even a spark of faith in our common human nature, doubt for a moment that momentous changes would follow from the simple circumstance of employment being constant and wages having a perpetually upward tendency? With opportunity for honest toil beckoning at every street corner is it likely that men would continue to follow the career of the tramp or the beggar? Is it not still less likely that men would spend their energies in laboriously acquiring the skill of the sneak-thief or the bank-burglar? Is it not pretty certain that with a constantly increasing

reward offered to diligence and skill, men would see the folly of laziness? Is it not probable that the sweets of rational leisure and the joys of the intellect will gradually reveal themselves to the manual worker as they have already done to those who are suitably conditioned? And can one not also see in imagination the emergence of that most compelling of all forces, a purified public opinion that will commend diligence and sobriety and all those things that are honest and of good report, while condemning those actions which make for social disintegration? All these changes seem to follow logically (human nature being what it is) from the simple proposition that the demand for human services should be even slightly in excess of the supply, and that in consequence the remuneration of labor should have a constantly upward tendency. A very little of that fundamental faith in the improbability of the species which is necessary to save us from despair, will convince us that in consequence of this slight change in the incidence of economic forces our prisons would probably become tenantless. With a generally diffused prosperity the latent kindness of mankind may be trusted to make our poorhouses no longer necessary; while the banishment of the spectre of poverty would certainly reduce the number of patients in our lunatic asylums. All these social transformations might take place, and, as far as the human imagination may be trusted when projecting itself into conditions never yet experienced, would take place through the simple change effected by the abolition of the unemployed man through the opening up of the land with all its opportunities.

Again, to trace by the aid of imagination the series of gradual and progressive changes that would seem sure to follow in the sphere of economics, would open up vistas of possibilities which would make the dreams of Utopians fade into insignificance. It is easy to see, to begin with, that with every encouragement to thrift and efficiency thrift and efficiency would increase as they are not encouraged to do at present. It would become possible for the humblest worker to save and invest, and the most obviously likely direction in which his investments would gravitate would be the company or corporation where he finds employment. With the reward of labor constantly growing greater and the exactions of monopoly growing less, one sees the workers gradually becoming stockholders in their own concerns and part owners in their own mills and machinery. It is not necessary to accept the fundamental postulates of modern Socialism to agree heartily with the words of Mr. H. M. Hyndman in *The Fortnightly Review*, for March: "Remove the unemployed permanently from the labor market and the wage earners would gradually become possessors of the means of producing and distributing the wealth which they themselves create." The process might be slow in the beginning, but on the principle that nothing succeeds like success, that nothing stimulates the development of qualities so much as the discovery that these qualities make for happiness, we may be assured that the pace would be an accelerating one and the changes more and more rapid in each generation.

Science has taught us many lessons during the last few decades as to the rapidity with which the entire social habits of a people may change in obedience to the stimulus of such seeming trifles as cheap postages, telephones and automobiles. The emergence of an emancipated "proletariat," a working class who could dictate the price of their labor as merchants can do with their goods, and who should find employers competing for the privilege of purchasing work, would be as startlingly new phenomenon as the world has ever seen. Yet the adaptation to the changed conditions will probably take place as quietly and naturally as such changes have occurred before at epoch-marking times. The stones which the empire builders have refused will become the chief headstones of the corner. Self-respect and sobriety will evolve naturally under the encouraging stimulus of economic independence, while culture and taste for the higher amenities and courtesies of life will generate themselves as they have already done among the well-to-do classes. That large capacity possessed by all animal organisms and particularly by man, for responding to change of environment, may be trusted to realize all the ideal conditions dreamed of by visionaries after the final liberation is effected that shall make man free to enjoy Nature's bounty. Truly it may be said of a nation as of an individual soul, "The kingdom of Heaven cometh not by observation. Neither shall ye say Lo here or Lo there, for the kingdom of heaven is within you."

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## THE SOUL OF THE SINGLE TAX

*(For the Review.)*

By **BENJAMIN F. LINDAS**

Whenever I use the term, Single Tax, I always feel that to those who are not familiar with its principles, it conveys an entirely erroneous idea. I always imagine that the name, to many, merely stirs up visions of endless statistics, dry details, tedious classifications, and technical comparisons of matters that are foreign to the interests of most of us.

This is one misconception of the meaning of the term, Single Tax, that cannot be too thoroughly dispelled. Single Tax is not in its essence a mere fiscal reform, but is really a religion—a way of life. Under Single Tax the collection of taxes would be but a means to an end; the end being the freedom of the individual in a commonwealth governed in accordance with the doctrine of the brotherhood of man.

But to be more particular, what, then, is the Single Tax?

Let us imagine the human race placed on this earth that has been stripped clean of all artificial fixtures; without homes, railroads, skyscrapers or tene-