



## LAND & LIBERTY

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## LAND VALUE TAXATION AND FREE TRADE

"Now, insomuch as the taxation of rent, or land values, must necessarily be increased just as we abolish other taxes, we may put the proposition into practical form by proposing—To abolish all taxation save that upon land values. As we have seen, the value of land is at the beginning of society nothing, but as society develops by the increase of population and the advance of the arts, it becomes greater and greater. In every civilised country, even the newest, the value of the land taken as a whole is sufficient to bear the entire expense of government. In the better developed countries it is much more than sufficient. Hence it will not be enough to merely place all taxes upon the value of land. It will be necessary, where rent exceeds the present governmental revenues, to commensurately increase the amount demanded in taxation, and to continue this increase as society progresses and rent advances. But this is so natural and easy a matter, that it may be considered as involved, or at least understood, in the proposition to put all taxes on the value of land. That is the first step upon which the practical struggle must be made."—Henry George (*Progress and Poverty*, Book VIII, Chapter II.)

"That, so far as it has yet gone, the controversy between protection or free trade has not been carried to its logical conclusions is evident from the positions which both sides occupy. Let it be ours to carry the inquiry wherever it may lead. The fact is, that fully to understand the tariff question we must go beyond the tariff question as ordinarily debated. And here, it may be, we shall find ground on which honest divergences of opinion may be reconciled, and facts which seem conflicting may fall into harmonious relations."—Henry George (*Protection or Free Trade—Introduction*.)

"Copenhagen seems to me to stand out as a significant milestone along the road to our goal. As I understand him, Henry George's proposal was to make land common property in effect by gradually but completely shifting taxation from production values to land values. I am not in sympathy with any disposition to consign Henry George's fundamental principle into the waste basket. Be on your guard

against a disposition to confine land value agitation to localities and avoid international complexities. The true method is to make both kinds of agitation with appropriate considerations for time, place and circumstances. I think that the international agitation should not side-track national agitations, and that national agitations should not obstruct the international."—(Louis F. Post, in a letter to the Editor.)

The Fourth International Conference for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade is now immediately in front of us. It and its findings will have passed into the history of the movement before another issue of this journal takes place. The Committee in charge of the arrangements have done their utmost to be equal to a great undertaking. It has meant hard work, but throughout there has been helpful understanding with the minimum of friction. This is as it should be, for the well-defined aim and object of the Conference leaves little room among earnest advocates for serious differences of opinion.

The *Handbook* of the Conference containing the official Programme of the full week's engagements is now in the hands of the members. Everyone with ideas of any such service is free to judge of its merits for himself. Already warm words of appreciation of it have come to the office. It has been described by one member as a "work of art and a credit to the cause," and additional supplies are in request.

The first International Conference was a noted success; the second better still; the third still more impressive, especially in respect of its giving birth to the International Union; the fourth to be held at Edinburgh this month should be (in things essential) a marked improvement on its forerunners. Some thirty papers have been accepted by the Committee. Time will not allow for a reading of even half the number, but there will be free and open discussion of the papers and all of them adopted by the Conference will appear in the Official Report of the proceedings. There are some six hundred enrolled members and fully half the number are expected to be in attendance. Representatives from twenty-four countries are named in the membership list, and one hundred members of the British Parliament, including members of the Government, have sent messages of approval and goodwill. There are other features of the Edinburgh Conference that could be enumerated but, for want of space, the items named above must suffice.

The Conference meets at an unique and favourable time for its deliberations. A member writes there is too little about Free Trade on the programme and urges that Free Trade is as important as the land question. "The single tax," our correspondent adds, "without Free Trade would be like propelling a boat with the oars all on the one side. Plenty of movement but very little progress."

We suggest that Free Trade has its place in the Programme and if the balance inclines to the land value side of the argument it is because this is the more important side to stress at this time. There is much discussion of Free Trade on many platforms to-day without any reference to Land Value Taxation. The widely noticed Economic Conference at

Geneva declared that the time has come to put an end to increase in tariffs and to move in the opposite direction; but its promoters declined even to entertain the suggestion that Land Value Taxation and Free Trade stand together. The delegates were not allowed to discuss the Memorandum on the subject presented by our International Union. It is the same with every organised meeting of free traders.

In the circumstances we are called upon to uphold the related doctrine of Free Trade in production to Free Trade in exchange. It is quite sound reasoning that tariff barriers obstruct the beneficence of Land Value Taxation, but it is important to show the distinction between land values and labour values. Our part in the Free Trade controversy must ever be of a type that will show the free traders that without the Taxation of Land Values they have no answer to their natural enemies, the protectionists. It is a commonplace with protectionists that there is nothing wrong with universal Free Trade; but that so long as other countries maintain their tariffs we must retaliate. The Taxation of Land Values is the best and indeed the only answer to this complaint. It is for us to show where the true source of public revenue is to be found, and, just as this comes to be more fully recognized, to that extent will the troublesome retaliation argument be driven out of the discussion.

At the final meeting of the Anti-Corn Law League, Richard Cobden declared that their achievement had not had its equal in the last 1,800 years, from a moral and social point of view. The principle of Free Trade which they had established, he said, was eternal in its truth, and universal in its application; and he looked forward with assurance to other nations realising the great social and moral importance of the Free Trade principle. The prophecy has not been fulfilled. The cause of the failure is due to the fact that the Manchester School cut the Free Trade principle in two and went their way with the poorer and less promising half. Henry George, in his "classic" on the question, showed clearly the mistake that had been committed; but by that time the Manchester School were already well on the road to ruin, and the schoolmen have since sedulously striven to reduce the science of political economy to the level of a statistical bureau. Cobden's belief in the eternal truth on which the principle of Free Trade rests has had an unreal existence in the house of its friends.

Land Value Taxation opens the way to new life in industry. It takes cognisance not only of the wealth produced but of the wealth that might be produced in a condition of economic freedom. The free traders' argument halts here and in despair sends its votaries on a crusade for the capture of foreign markets. Cobden urged that the prosperity of the foreigner was to our advantage. The opposing view held by Protectionists, and by some Free Traders, is that the foreigner is a rival in commerce who must be met and conquered in the markets of the world. It is our concern to arrest the progress of this warlike pursuit of wealth. The land value policy will open doors now closed in every land to industrial development. It is the

only possible way to undermine and overthrow the tariff walls that keep trade and commerce in compartments and men of different nations apart.

The evil spirit of the commercial war, now everywhere rampant, and with a gathering momentum that is not in dispute, now takes pride of place at every peace discussion at Geneva, or elsewhere. It cannot be otherwise in a world like ours where the opportunities to life and the pursuit of happiness are held and controlled by a class of national and international financiers whose privileged combines and cartels ride roughshod over the rights of the community in the land. The land speculator is nourished with subsidies from the public purse and capitalism, so named, is fed on the higher prices that the tariffs can squeeze out of the consumer; and, as the story goes, "for the employment of our own people." It is a ghastly affair, yet the common cry of the politician is for more and not less of this madness.

All schemes to continue this plunder of the public purse, formulated and carried out by the powers that be, are, needless to say, to provide work for the worker. Yet the one certain result is not to diminish or cure unemployment, but to add to the number of its victims. Roads are to be made, railways better equipped, and bridges erected; the necessary costs of course coming out of the pockets of the taxpayer. He will spend more on this reconstruction and have so much less to spend on his own requirements; he is to take on some men for the new developments and dispense with others now supplying him with so much service.

And this, we are given to understand, will quicken trade and bring new prosperity. It might, if only the Government could make its own economic law. But economic law, like any other rule of the universe, does not exist to go to the side of a Government in distress; it is for the Government to get on the side of the law. Improvements, public or private, will enhance the economic value of the land and unless and until provision is made for appropriating this value for the public who create it, the enrichment of the landowners and the erection of additional barriers to industry and employment is all that can happen. Speculation in higher land values means not less but more unemployment.

As Thorold Rogers states: "Every permanent improvement of the soil, every railway and road, every betterment of the general condition of society, every facility given for production, every stimulus applied to consumption, raises rent; the landowner sleeps but thrives; he alone, among all the recipients in the distribution of products, owes everything to the labour of others, contributes nothing of his own."

These are the weighty words not of any fanatical land taxer, but of a noted student and interpreter of the working of economic law as history reveals it. The Edinburgh Conference meets at an opportune moment to affirm its belief in this terse and tense exposition of the case against land monopoly, and once more to put boldly forward the Land Value and Free Trade policy as expounded by Henry George.

The real power of the working masses is the vote,

and they have given—and not for the first time—a decisive *No* to the demand for Protection, naked and unashamed. In Great Britain the working people instinctively feel that Protection is no way out of their distress. But that is not enough. So long as unemployment prevails the Free Trade principle is insecure. It is the task of the International Union to impress upon the public mind the urgency of the land value policy and to show its relationship to Free Trade. The Conference has been convened for this purpose and this purpose alone. It will serve other good ends arising out of a friendly and free interchange of opinion. It will bring Henry George men and women together from many lands for a week's intellectual and spiritual fellowship, and it will give new strength and courage to those near and far who for one reason or another are debarred from personal attendance. With a Press notice half equal to the occasion, the Conference would give tone to the politics of Europe. But the Press as a practice have no listening ear for the radical issue that goes to the root cause of social problems.

The appeal, therefore, the Conference makes must in the main be addressed to our own supporters and friends; nor are these so small in number as some people affect to believe. The answer to any such counting of heads is that we may be small in numbers, but who is there to question our influence? The call of the municipalities for powers to raise local revenue from land values is insistent and it is our call. The opinion in the House of Commons for a Budget tax on land values has behind it a sentiment in the constituencies which sometimes amazes the candidates. That is largely, if not wholly, the result of our educational efforts. The United Committee and the Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values have done their work well and are alive still to the need for coping with a developing situation.

The Edinburgh Conference will be, in the words of Louis Post, another significant milestone on the road to our goal. Every country and every locality where the propaganda has a footing must have regard to its own circumstances as to what may or may not be attempted to make new contacts and bring new adherents to the work. The International Union has come to stay and its standing in political adventure will help to bind our forces together for wider possibilities. It has already done so. It was formed with this intention. There are some who crave for a change in the title of the Union. The answer is, we did not adopt the title at Copenhagen. It was the other way about; it was the title that adopted us and it was taken for our use and guidance from whence it first appeared—in the inspiring pages of *Progress and Poverty*.

In the matter of nomenclature there are some societies who are at a loss for a suitable name to identify their aim and object. They exist and carry on under the handicap. It is not our experience. The name we are known by coincides with what we are actually aiming at—Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. What more is required? If we are less advanced than we should be, or might be, it cannot be the name that is the drawback. Is it not rather because there has not been enough

done to make the name better serve the movement? It is the policy that counts and the forces arrayed against the policy are neither weakminded nor asleep. They know the goal we are striving to reach and we can count on their undying opposition, whatever be the name or the colour of the banner we may choose to march under.

The Conference will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Progress and Poverty*. In the spirit of the teaching of Henry George we cordially offer a welcome to members of the Conference, with a special "handshake" for our colleagues and visitors from other lands. One of the sessions will be devoted to a discussion on "How Best to Advance the Objects of the Conference." This session ought to figure as one of the most important of the events in a crowded week's programme. J. P.

From whence springs this lust for gain, to gratify which men tread everything pure and noble under their feet? . . . Does it not spring from the fear of want? Carlyle says poverty is the hell of which the modern Englishman is most afraid. And he is right. Poverty is the open-mouthed, relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society. For poverty is not merely deprivation. It means shame; degradation; the searing of the most sensitive parts of our moral and mental nature as with hot irons. You love your wife. You love your children. But would it not be easier to see them die, than to see them reduced to the pinch of want in which large classes in every highly civilized community live?—Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, page 455, "the book that was read around the world."

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It is a pleasure to announce the presence of the Rev Herbert S. Bigelow at the Edinburgh Conference. As an eminent preacher of the social righteousness associated with the broadest Christianity and with the economic doctrines of Henry George, a warm welcome awaits him. In the Single Tax movement in America his name is a household word. He will be chief speaker at the final "Service of Addresses," as we named this meeting in previous issues, taking place in the Assembly Hall of the Conference on Sunday, 4th August. The subject is "The Religious Teaching of Henry George." With the Rev Herbert S. Bigelow we shall have on the platform, among others, our esteemed and indefatigable colleague, the Rev Mervyn James Stewart, whose name is also a household word in Single Tax circles.

The Rev H. S. Bigelow arrives by the *Doric* from Montreal with Dr Mark Milliken and members from America. By favour of Rev W. B. Tavener, the Unitarian Church Minister, Mr Bigelow is to take the pulpit at St. Mark's, Castle Street, Edinburgh, on Sunday morning, 28th July. Members of the Conference are cordially invited.

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