

Land and Freedom

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Current Comment

DR. FRANK CRANE is occasionally a gladness but more often an irritation. In one of his recent articles he says:

The best method of taxation, the one that has the most reason and common sense behind it, is what is known as Single Tax. I do not think, however, that it would be practical to attain Single Tax at present, as our property system is so complicated and the mass of prejudice against this form of tax is at present so great. No matter how sensible and logical a system is we have to take into account the material we have to work with, which is the public mind. And just now the public mind is both incapable and unwilling to consider the arguments of Single Tax.

Perhaps if believers in the Single Tax as the "best method of taxation" would preach it rather than the Sales Tax, which just now is absorbing Dr. Crane's activities, the public mind would be more willing to consider it and maybe adopt it in preference to the sales tax swindle. Why not try preaching what you believe in, Doctor?

THE Philadelphia *Public Ledger* speaking of the Platform of the Commonwealth Land Party says it "sounds like the advertisements on patent medicine bottles—good for what ails you. By this time the world is a little suspicious of political and economic panaceas * * * * * The failure of experiments with these universal cure-alls does not, however, discourage their followers, who go bravely on."

The taking of the rent of land would not provide a cure-all. There would still remain some unsettled questions. But if the land question is not the fundamental question then all thinkers on the social problem are mistaken. If we do not begin with the material universe out of which all wealth is produced and from which all men must live, we are not likely to get far with schemes for social reform. Nothing is easier than to sneer at the Single Tax as a universal cure-all. When Henry George was asked if the Single Tax was a cure for every ill, he replied, "No, but Freedom is." And the taking of the rent of land for public purposes is the first and necessary step on the road to freedom.

EDUCATORS throughout the country have a great respect for Prof. John Dewey, of Columbia University. By many of these he is considered the foremost scholar in America. It is therefore with great pleasure we are per-

mitted to print the following letter addressed to Mr. E. B. Swinney by Prof. Dewey:

"In reply to yours of the 28th, I would state that for many years, ever since first familiarizing myself with the principle of the so-called Single Tax, I have regarded it as both theoretically and practically sound, and an indispensable basis of much needed social reform.

I may add that I am a great admirer of the general social philosophy of Henry George, whose contribution to intellectual thinking about social matters, even quite apart from his practical proposals, does not seem to me to have received the recognition it deserves among thinking people.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) JOHN DEWEY

ANOTHER gentleman of distinction in New York City contributes his quota to the misinformation that is now very much in evidence. He is Lewis E. Pierson, President of the Merchants Association, and this is what he says:

"Taxes on land have increased the cost of property on which houses can be built. Taxes on the lumberman and on the brick manufacturer have increased the cost of the floors and walls. Taxes on steel and iron have increased the cost of the metal going into the house. Taxes on the manufacturer of tiles have increased the cost of the roof. Taxes on the manufacturer of plumbing and electrical fixtures have increased the cost of the interior. And whether the man who occupies the house purchases it or rents it he must pay not only for the actual labor and material in the building, but also for an invisible but expensive addition built out of Government taxes."

A simple inquiry into the matter would have acquainted him with the fact that taxes on land are not added to the cost of land, but tend instead to decrease its cost. Seeing the tendency of most of the taxes which he enumerates to increase the cost of the thing taxed, he jumps to the conclusion that this is also true of taxes on land. It is probably an entirely honest conclusion, but Mr. Pierson needs enlightenment.

CONGRESSMAN OSCAR E. KELLER, of all persons in the world, must add to the general confusion in an otherwise excellent speech delivered in the House. He says:

"A tax on inheritances is not a tax upon industry and does not have an injurious effect on business. Instead, it actually will increase business and add more capital for productive purposes by taking money which otherwise would be held by individual heirs or trusteeships, generally in the form of tax-exempt securities, and diffusing it for productive purposes."