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REPRESENTATIVE WOMEN ON VITAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

I. Is The Single Tax Enough?

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. . . You admit, I suppose:

1. That all wealth is created by the application of labor to land.
2. That wages depend upon the produce which labor can obtain at the highest point of productiveness open to it without the payment of rent.
3. And that these wages are what are known as the general rate of wages, and that all wages up to the highest depend upon this general rate of wages, rising and falling, broadly speaking, as they rise and fall.

Right here must be our difference. You believe we cannot abolish poverty without sharing equally the results of individual effort, while single-taxers believe that we can abolish it by sharing equally economic rent. We believe that economic rent belongs to all because it represents the land, so to speak, to which we all have a right. We believe that wages belong to each according to the amount of his product, and that any other disposition of them is robbery, and a denial of nature which has given us varying powers and desires; the gratification of the latter stimulating us to the best use of the former.

Let us suppose that the total present product of labor, i. e., everything in the country, were equally divided among the people of the United States, you can see that while no one would starve, all art, science, literature, and many, many industries would at once cease, and *unless the total product were greatly increased, so as to give a much larger share to each*, civilization would be at an end. What we both want is that all should be

raised to a higher level of desire and attainment, is it not?

I believe you agree with me that the total product must be increased because you say the freeing of the land must be the first step. You admit by this that the only way to increase the total product is to let labor get at land. And it must be so since labor and land are the only factors in the production of wealth —capital being only stored-up labor.

Now up to this point I think we are agreed. Then what is your difficulty? For, of course, if wages are high and all are comfortable there is no "social problem," and wages cannot be high unless the total product is increased. It must be that you believe that the remainder of the product will not go to labor even after that part which is claimed as economic rent is secured to all by law; but that it will go in unjust amount to monopoly. It cannot, my dear friend, it *cannot*. All monopolies have their root in land monopoly. Destroy that and they die. With taxation abolished and access to land made easy, monopoly in the products of labor would be impossible, for the rise in price of any commodity would quickly determine labor toward the production of that commodity and prices would be reduced to a just amount. Indeed, the fact that such result was inevitable would prevent the asking of a monopoly price. You see how the abolition of the tariff would affect the prices of imported goods and the home-made product. Under conditions of freedom the same principle would work the same result in all industries. As for monopolies of service like railroads, telegraphs, etc., they have their strength in monopoly of land. I need not tell you how the single tax would affect the working of mines.

Consider that farmers were prosperous when our public domain was large and the tariff did not increase the price of what they had to buy while what they had to sell brought them no more; that the taxation of land values will practically have the same effect as enlarging the public domain; that farm land will have little or no rent under the single tax; that farmers are our largest class and our basic class, all industries resting upon theirs and their prosperity insuring the prosperity of the nation; that the general rate of wages will be what the farmer can make for himself; and above all remember this: that it is not because one individual can go upon unoccupied land if his employer does not offer him higher wages than he can make for himself on land at the margin of cultivation; it is because great numbers can and will go on the land and by so making a good living will demand the product of others, who will produce in those lines only so long as they can make as much as they could at farming.

Take a broad view and see how all this will affect society — the relations of classes and industries; how it will affect production and exchange; how it will stimulate individual exertion and give the social virtues a chance to grow.

We take certain facts of nature and of human nature and we reason from analogy. We are arithmetical, geometrical in our precision. It is the socialists who trust to their imagination and ignore the nature of man.

Read the chapter on "Wages" in "Progress and Poverty" and see if the reasoning is not close. Farmers are the people who work at the margin of cultivation, most of them; and where freedom of access to land is assured they make a good living. There are not many persons gifted with the power of getting riches. Under the single tax those who are will be of service to humanity.