

AFFIRMATIVE DISCUSSION

Arena. 24: 645-8. December, 1900.

Land Question and Economic Progress. Bolton Hall.

Q. Mr. Hall, as one who has made a study of the single tax, do you believe that it would prove an efficient remedy for reducing uninvited poverty to a minimum?

A. Henry George says that, by taking the rental value of land for the public, "the great cause of the present unequal distribution of wealth would be destroyed, and that one-sided competition would cease which now deprives men who possess nothing but power to labor of the benefits of advancing civilization, and forces wages to a minimum, no matter what the increase of wealth, Labor [each man for himself, or oftener in combinations], free to the natural elements of production, would no longer be incapable of employing itself, and competition, acting as fully and freely between employers as between employed, would carry wages up to what is truly their natural rate—the full value of the produce of labor—and keep them there."

Q. What do you think of the influence that it would have ethically on society?

A. Ethical progress must be the progress of the race. The progress of the race needs opportunity for development, and the first requirement for this is the use of the resources of Nature. Denial of this use perverts our whole social system, and all share in the perversion, which makes fellowship impossible: since we are all either receivers of rent of land—that is, thieves—or payers of rent of land—that is, abettors of thieves. Equal use of the land would enable us to live for one another instead of *on* one another.

Q. What do you think in regard to the contention that the taxation of land values only would favor the accumulation of

wealth on the part of those who hold bonded securities and prove oppressive to the land holders or owners?

A. We think that justice would "favor the accumulation of one's own wealth," if any one cared to accumulate what he could get at will. "'Bondholders,' however," says Louis F. Post, "are, in the main, themselves the landowners; for a bond is usually the first title to some interest in land, such as a railroad franchise. It could not, therefore, both favor and oppress them. Further, it could not be oppressive to landowners—that is, to owners of a special privilege—to charge them the value of what they get, even though it would prevent their accumulation of other people's wealth."

Q. Why do you believe it is a fundamental remedy?

A. As is said in "Things as They Are": "The reform, then, of our present land 'system' is not the end of reforms nor the sum of reforms. It is, as its great teacher has said, the gateway of reform. More than that, it is the one reform without which all others will be self-destructive, because they tend to increase either population or production, and thereby to increase rent, and so to foster every form of monopoly."

Q. Many farmers oppose the single tax, as they think it would be oppressive to them. In other words, they hold that their land would be more heavily taxed than all these taxes put together amount to at present, while the holder of bank stock and other securities would be practically exempt from taxation. Do you think their position is well taken?

A. When it is remembered that some land in cities is worth twelve millions of dollars an acre; that a small building lot in the business center of even a small village is worth more than a whole field of the best farming land in the neighborhood; that a few acres of coal or iron is worth more than great groups of farms; that the right of way of a railroad company through a thickly-settled district or between important points is worth more than its rolling stock; that the value of workingmen's cottages in the suburbs is trifling in comparison with the value of city residence sites—the absurdity, if not the dishonesty, of the plea that the single tax would discriminate against farmers and small home owners and in favor of the rich is evident. The bad faith of this plea is emphasized when we consider that under existing systems of taxation the farmer and the

poor home owner are compelled to pay in taxes on improvements, food, clothing, and other objects of consumption much more than the full annual value of their bare land.

World's Work. 21: 13795-6. December, 1910.

Way Toward The Model City. Frederic C. Howe.

Germany has set the pace in city-building, as in many other reforms. It is the only country in the world that has treated the subject as a science. Germany designs its cities as the World's Fairs at Chicago or St. Louis were designed by landscape artists and architects. They are planned from the bottom up. And the thing in most striking contrast with our own cities is the power which the German municipality enjoys over the land within its limits. During the summer of 1909 I visited a number of the leading cities of Germany and found that many officials insisted, with no feeling of apology, that the city must own all of the land within its limits. Only by ownership, it was said, could the housing problem be solved; only in this way could parks, streets, boulevards, and planning projects be carried out and industrial development be made to harmonize with the ideals of what these experts felt that the modern city could be made. In pursuance of this policy the German city approaches the land question in three ways, all of which are novel. First, by ownership. A surprising number of cities own not only parks and open spaces, but great wooded estates outside of the city, which are used for pleasure as well as for profit. They are worked as forest preserves. A large part of the building area within the city is owned as well. Some idea of the holdings of the cities can be got from the accompanying diagrams.

Some cities are also active speculators in city and suburban land. They make a business of buying and selling for profit. Düsseldorf, for instance, a city of 300,000, has set side a fund of \$5,500,000 for the purpose of land-speculation.

The city controls the land-owner and land-speculator in yet another way. Only a part of the site may be built upon. The percentage differs according to the section of the city. In the business centres the owner may use as much as 60 per