

Early 20th Century Definition of the Single Tax

THE Manhattan Single Tax Club on Sunday evening, October 13 (1912) varied its regular program by having an "amateur night" at which the younger element competed for prizes offered for the best 250 word definition of the single tax. The following entry by Gaston Haxo, a very young man and a recent convert to the cause, was chosen by the judges because it fulfilled the requirements of a definition of, rather than an essay on, the single tax:

"The purpose of the single tax is not merely to change the present system of taxation, but to abolish private ownership of land and land speculation, which are responsible for industrial depressions and the poverty and vice of the century.

"We Single Taxers hold that all men are born with equal rights to life, and since men can only live by using the earth they must have equal rights to its use, and the land of the country must be the common property of all the people. Today the land is held by the few and the rest of us are compelled to give to the owners the greater part of the fruits of our toil for the privilege of existing. The right of private ownership can only apply to things produced by human efforts, and that right we regard as sacred. As to land, no man made it, but every one must depend upon it for life, and therefore we say that no man has a better right to it than another.

"Land cannot be divided equally; therefore the only way to secure to all the people their share of the common heritage is to make every user of land pay into the public treasury the rent of the land he occupies, in the form of a tax, and since this annual value of land will suffice to run city, state and national government, we propose to abolish all other taxes now levied upon the products of labor.

"This will enable the individual to retain the full value of what he produces, while by placing into the public treasury the values which are, and only can be, created by society, the individual will receive in the form of public benefits the full returns for what he has created as a member of the community."

—From the Nov.-Dec. 1912 issue of the Single Tax Review

(Gaston Haxo is alive and well and living in Florida.)

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