

SOCIAL INJUSTICE

By Max Hirsch (Melbourne)

The Single Tax will prove to be the real solution for the social question. My friends and I, and an ever-growing number of earnest men all over the world, regard it as the only solution of the riddle which our generation must solve or perish. But what is this social question, this many-headed monster which meets us at every turn? It cannot be answered in one sentence; for that social question presents itself in as many aspects as there are different classes in the community.

To the millionaire the social question is summed up in what he is pleased to call the unreasonable, the threatening discontent of the labouring masses; to the business man it presents itself in the shape of ever-growing competition and the menacing jaws of the bankruptcy court; it affrights the farmer in the form of a mortgage growing like a snow-ball and threatening to crush him under its weight; to the working-man it comes in the shape of lack of employment, low wages, insanitary and over-crowded dwellings, if not in the utter impossibility to find the work which might bring bread to him and his. So many classes—so many causes.

MONOPOLY, NOT COMPETITION
TO BLAME

Each class of the community keeps its eyes fixed on its own condition, and therefore fails to grasp that there must be a universal cause to which all these varying symptoms are due. Narrow and insufficient as all these explanations are, there is none more narrow than that which so many working men have imbibed from their socialistic leaders—the idea that social injustice is due to competition. Competition indeed, is a bad thing, an unnatural thing, when twenty men have to compete with each other for food that can only satisfy the hunger of ten; but to ascribe this insufficiency of food to competition would surely be a huge mistake.

Competition is the prime agent of progress. Without competition there would be stagnation; where competition is not, there is monopoly. But it must be equal competition, free competition, not the one-sided and hunger-enforced competition which we know to-day.

Whenever I hear of competition alleged as the cause of social injustice, my mind reverts at once to that tragic story of the "black hole of Calcutta." You all know how 146 English captives were thrust into a prison only 20 feet square and having only one small aperture communicating with the outer air. Only 23 of them were found alive in the morning; the rest lay dead, trampled under foot, close to the air hole. "Victims of unregulated competition," some would say, "if only you had regulated their competition they would all

be alive." "Victims of injustice!" we Single Taxers say. There was air enough for all of them, if they had only been allowed to get at it. These poor victims, however, were not to blame. The door that shut them off from God's free air was secured by iron bars and bolts beyond their strength to break. But what would you say of them, if the door had been secured by a wooden bolt only which would have snapped like a pipe-stem before their united strength? Surely then they would no longer be called victims, but fools only.

THE REMEDY

That is the case with all people in your position. The bolts and bars which shut you into the black hole of our civilisation, which prevent you from taking advantage of God's gift, which exclude you from the source of all wealth—the land, and compel you to compete for the little that is left to you, they would snap like pipe-stems before your united strength. One-sided, wage-reducing, soul-destroying competition is not the cause but one of the symptoms of social injustice, the cause of it is the exclusion of the majority of the people from their common heritage—the land.

Consider it. Man is the master of this earth, but the land is the free gift of the Creator to all men. All men are equally entitled to its use, and no man can keep land out of use when the whole rental value of it is taken for the community. That system, known as the Single Tax, is the solution that I recommend to you. It is a just, an effective, and an eminently practical proposal, for it would exercise a better influence on the well-being of the people from its very initiation.

[We are indebted to PROGRESS (Melbourne), March, 1915, for this extract from an address by the late Max Hirsch.]



MAX HIRSCH, 1853-1909

A PATRIOTIC ACRE

The Press Bureau issued, on February 17th, the following telegram from the President of Saskatchewan: Grain Growers' Association to His Majesty King George and His Majesty's Government: This the annual convention of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association in session has by a unanimous vote decided to ask each farmer of Saskatchewan to raise one extra acre of wheat this year, to be called the "patriotic acre," and to present the proceeds of the same in flour to the Imperial Government in token of loyalty and devotion to the Empire.—J. A. Maharg, President.

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Many British farmers who have wished to put more land under wheat have been barred from doing so by clauses in their leases prohibiting them from breaking up more land; and their landlords have refused to consent to this agreement being broken except on payment of a prohibitive fine.