

PROF. HADLEY AND PRIVATE LAND
TENURE.

"The good effects of the system of private land tenure are most conspicuously seen when the owner and the occupier of the land are one and the same person."—"Hadley Economics," page 130.

What, oh, what does he mean?

—SINGLE TAX REVIEW, May-June, page 45.

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

Perhaps Prof. Hadley means what he says, for he tells the exact truth. In order that a man shall make the best use of land it must be his own. But Prof. Hadley doubtless had another idea in his mind when he penned these four lines. Very likely he is opposed to the Single Tax. In this quotation he takes advantage of the statement of many Single Tax writers and speakers that the Single Tax will abolish private ownership of land, and he makes the above *true statement*, knowing that the reader will understand that he writes this as an argument against the proposition, because he takes Single Taxers at their word that it will abolish ownership. He either knows that it will achieve exactly the result described in these four lines or he does not know it.

If he does not know it, it is a very great pity he has given so little attention to the land question as not to be able to see that the Single Tax will destroy monopoly of land and make every user who desires it, the owner of the land he uses.

These four lines of Prof. Hadley's are an insinuation that the Single Tax will achieve the very reverse of the statement contained therein; in other words, if it were true that the Single Tax would destroy private ownership those four lines would be a good argument to use against it. As a matter of fact all men who favor the present system of land monopoly use the claim of many Single Taxers that the private ownership of land should be abolished as the very best argument they need against the Single Tax. Take any book, pamphlet or essay against the taxation of land values and fully half of what is written is an attack on the proposition to abolish land ownership, when as a matter of fact it will do the very reverse; it will extend private ownership

to every man or woman who wants a home and a natural opportunity on which to produce a living, whether it is by raising food, digging coal or sand or stone or making brick.

And this home or opportunity will be his or hers "to have and to hold" as exclusively and privately as it is at present, subject only to a higher tax, perhaps, but whether higher or lower it is exactly what he or she should pay for the exclusive ownership and control of that much of the earth.

In further discussion of the statement in those four lines let us take a concrete instance.

Besides being the owner of my house and a little more than an acre of land where my house is, I own fifty acres seven miles from the heart of the city. It is becoming desirable for residence even of people who come into the city every day, for it lies close to a steam and traction line. I have sold several lots to people who have built upon them. The remainder of the land I have rented to farmers living close by, as I have no improvements upon the land. They pay me a cash rent every year. My transactions are, of course, in exact accordance with the present taxation system which Prof. Hadley wishes maintained, although the user and occupier of this land are not one and the same person. The system of landlordism which we often hear condemned exists in full flower.

Now suppose my State proceeds to adopt Single Tax and the plan shall be to take 20 per cent. per annum off the tax on improvements and add 20 per cent. on the land until the tax is entirely off improvements and the tax on the land equals the ground rent. The land is best adapted to be used for country places of about an acre in size. I have only enough capital to spare from my business to build one house and as I am willing to have one house as an investment of this kind to yield me a revenue, I have one acre surveyed and I build a house on it and rent it to a tenant.

There are forty odd acres still unimproved on which in five years there will be a tax equal to the ground rent, and of course, the ground rent is all

that I could possibly collect from my tenants. As I do not propose to put any more of my capital into houses is it not plain that I will refuse to pay tax on the unimproved land, and that it will be sold for taxes just as at present? No man can buy and hold it unimproved in the expectation of getting any return for his money invested. Who will buy it? Why the people who want it for homes and to raise garden stuff. They will be able to get possession by having money enough to pay the coming year's tax on the land, perhaps only six months tax in advance will be required to get a deed "to have and to hold" as long as grass grows and water runs, provided they pay the tax just as required at present. So the whole forty odd acres are sold for unpaid taxes and bought by people whose only object in buying would be to make homes and live there, and then we would have an instance where "The good effects of the system of land tenure are more conspicuously seen where the owner and occupier of the land are one and the same person."

CINCINNATI, OHIO. THOMAS HUNT.

DID HENRY GEORGE CONTRADICT HIMSELF?

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

"The truth is . . . that private property in land is a bold, bare, enormous wrong, like that of chattel slavery."

"I do not propose to confiscate private property in land Let the individuals who now hold it still retain, if they want to, possession of what they are pleased to call *their* land. . . . Let them buy and sell and bequeath and devise it."

I submit, with all due deference, that these two questions as they stand are contradictory; or at least that they involve all the defects of such a deliverance as "chattel slavery is an enormous wrong, but I do not propose to abolish it. Let slave-holders still retain, if they want to, possession of the title deeds to their slaves."

Of course, we are all aware that Henry George, who wrote the two passages above quoted, *did* propose, by means of the

Single Tax, to correct the "enormous wrong" which, under the existing system, accompanies the private ownership of land, but that wrong is the private ownership, not of land, but of what is called "land value."

Mr. George fully recognizes that specific portions of land must be owned by specific individuals as a condition of civilized society; in the second of these quotations he announces his perfect willingness that those who are in possession of land should still retain it, or sell it, bequeath or devise it as they see fit—that is to say, exercise all the functions of ownership in connection with it. But these powers of ownership are to be restricted to the land itself. The real "enormous wrong" does not lodge here, it is in the extension of the right of ownership beyond the land to the land value. Let society take that for public revenue, and justice will be fully vindicated without the least disturbance to the private ownership of land.

No doubt Mr. George intended in his writings everywhere that by the expression private ownership of land, was to be understood ownership of land value. It is most unfortunate, I think, that he did not in every case use language which would unmistakably make this clear.

During the campaign in Oregon, the speakers who appeared against the Single Tax amendment depended chiefly upon the quotations they read from "Progress and Poverty," in which the abolition of "private property in land" was apparently taught. From this it was easy for them to deduce that the Single Tax doctrine was the State ownership and administration of land, or, as Charles H. Shields used to put it—"a return to the system of the common ownership of land that existed in the days of savagery."

Of course, private property in land is perfectly consistent with public ownership of land value, and it is the latter which the Single Tax system has in contemplation. Why, then, should Single Taxers complicate the idea of using terms carelessly? I could wish, indeed, that it were possible to banish altogether the misleading expression "land value." It infallibly conveys the idea of a value