

The Progress of the Singletax Movement

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THE greater a reform is the longer usually it requires for it to take hold in the public mind. But having once got a fair start nothing can stop its growth—not if the reform be founded upon the principles of justice and eternal truth.

The movement for the singletax on land values is a beautiful illustration of this fact. It is now forty-six years since Henry George published his "Progress and Poverty." When that great work first appeared there were those who believed that the message it bore would never get beyond the stage of theoretical discussion. Others, bolder yet, predicted that the book would never even be heard of. Nevertheless the book soon found friends—friends who were willing to "toil for it, suffer for it, if need be die for it," who translated its message into the language of every civilized race, carried it to the ends of the earth, and who, multiplying as a "mighty army with banners," have now written its principles to a greater or less extent into the laws of practically every nation on the globe.

Let us see briefly just how large an advance, since the days of its infancy, the singletax cause has made throughout the world.

UNITED STATES

In the United States mention should first be made perhaps as to the growing use of the principle of "special assessment"—that is, as to the growing custom of towns and cities in paying for new roads, tunnels, parks, bridges, boulevards and similar public improvements, not by a general tax on all property but by a tax levied solely against the adjoining land. This, of course, is but a narrow application of the singletax principle, but the increasing use that is made of it shows quite clearly which way the current of public thought is running.

Attention might also be called in passing to the healthy and uninterrupted growth of the singletax enclaves or colonies—Fairhope in Alabama, Arden in Delaware, Free Acres in New Jersey,

Tahanto in Massachusetts, and Halidon in Maine — colonies where the advantages of untaxing industry and raising the government revenue from the rent of land only are being demonstrated to the public in a small but convincing fashion.*

Of wider significance than the above is the tax reform that has been brought about in the irrigation districts of California. As originally adopted, the irrigation law of California provided for the taxation of both land and improvements. In 1909, however, the law was amended limiting assessments in all new irrigation districts to land values only and permitting the five irrigation districts then existing to adopt the new system by a majority vote of the resident landholders. The result is that today on an area approximating 1,500,000 acres (2,340 square miles) comprising the richest and most fertile valleys in the state—notably the Modesto,** the Oakdale*** and the Turlock districts—no taxes for irrigation purposes whatever are levied on houses, barns, cattle, crops, personal property or other improvements—all the revenue for these purposes being raised from the value of land only.

With a like object in mind the farmers of North Dakota passed laws in 1917 and 1919 that raised the assessment on land to its full actual value while reducing to fifty per cent the taxes on farm machinery, personal property, and buildings used for resident purposes.

Similarly Minnesota, after a long struggle, passed on April

* See "Enclaves of Economic Rent," Vol. IV. Published by Fiske Warren, Harvard, Mass., 1924.

** "The new system of taxation in collecting all of the tax from the value of the land has brought great prosperity to our district. Farmers are now encouraged to improve their property. Industry and thrift are not punished by an increase in taxes."—From a statement made by the Modesto Chamber of Commerce in February, 1914.

***"The Single Tax has made a great deal of difference for the betterment of the Oakdale district. . . . Many say they can now afford to borrow money and make improvements which they could not do under the old system. We invite farmers to come and settle among us. Their industry will not be taxed. Our Single Tax system encourages industry. We make the man who keeps his land idle pay the same tax as the man who improves. Those who build up our community and create its wealth will not be penalized."—From a public statement made by the Oakdale Board of Trade and signed by leading officials and heads of public bodies in Oakdale, May 22, 1914.

11, 1923, a revenue law which does not tax the industry of mining as such, but which does place, as a beginning a tax of six per cent on the royalties received by the owners of mineral lands for "permission to explore, develop, take out and ship iron or other ores."*

Maryland also in 1915 wiped out the constitutional provision requiring equal taxation of all property and authorized classification. Going further in 1916, it extended to all towns and cities, except Baltimore, the right to raise local revenue in any way the municipalities see fit. As a result, a number of smaller towns have found it advisable to exempt personal property; others to tax improvements at a lower rate than land values, while one—Capitol Heights in Prince Georges county—has, for eight years past, raised all local revenue by taxing land values only regardless of improvements.**

Hitting out in the same direction, the city of New York passed an Act in 1920 exempting new dwellings of a moderate amount from taxation for a period of ten years—the object being to break the back of the serious housing crisis existing in the metropolis at that time.

Of deeper significance than the above is the legislation enacted twelve years ago in Pittsburgh, Pa. In 1913 the city of Pittsburgh adopted its "Graded Tax Law" by which it has cut down gradually the tax burden on its improvements so that today the tax rate on buildings is but 50 per cent of the rate on land.***

These are by no means all the advances towards the singletax idea that have occurred in the United States since the publication of "Progress and Poverty," but they are sufficient at least to show that the movement is slowly but steadily going forward—and going forward in spite of all the odds arrayed against it.

CANADA.

Let us cross the boundary line into Canada. Here we find the singletax movement to have made much faster headway than it

* See Report of the National Tax Relief Convention of the Manufacturers and Merchants Federal Tax League, Chicago, 1923, pp. 62-65.

** Bulletin 10 of the Maryland Tax Reform Association, Baltimore, Md., 1924.

***For a further account of how the Pittsburgh law has worked since its adoption see the author's book "False Education in our Colleges and Universities," Chap. V.

has in the United States. This is particularly true of the western provinces of Canada. In the eastern provinces little progress has been recorded. Ontario did, after a long and bitter fight, manage to pass in 1920 a Municipal Tax Exemption Act giving any city, town or village in the province the right to tax its land apart from its improvements if it so desired.

Unfortunately for this Act however its opponents were successful in having it repealed in 1924. But it was not repealed before at least one city (Fort Erie) had managed to throw off the tax burden on its improvements as permitted by the law.*

In the province of Manitoba however the achievements have been considerably greater. In Manitoba farm improvements and personal property of all kinds are now totally exempt.** No farmer pays any local taxes save on the value of his land. While the towns and cities in Manitoba still tax improvements to a greater or less extent, together with some businesses and occupations, most of the revenue is obtained from land values only. In the city of Winnipeg (pop. 179,087) land is assessed at its full value while improvements are assessed at but two-thirds of their value.*** Incidentally the cost of the new water supply of the Greater Winnipeg Water District is met by a special levy on the value of land apart from improvements.****

In the province of Saskatchewan the situation is better still. In this province the local authorities of the cities, towns, villages and rural districts assess the land on its full value while buildings and other improvements are assessed only on a certain percentage of their value which must not be more than 60 per cent. but may be a great deal less.***** Prince Albert, for instance, (pop. 7,554) assesses improvements at 45 per cent of their value, Saskatoon (pop. 30,000) at 35 per cent, and Regina

* "The Square Deal," Toronto, Canada, June, 1924.

** "Assessment of farm lands in Manitoba is on the value of the land only. Improvements of all kinds are exempt. The straight land tax payable to his municipality is the only tax to which a Manitoba farmer is subject."—From "Opportunities in Manitoba," published by the Canadian Government, 1923.

*** "Land and Liberty," August, 1925, p. 176. Published at 11 Tothill St., London, S. W. 1, England.

**** See letter from James G. Hay, the Assessment Commissioner of the City of Winnipeg. Published in "Land and Liberty" (London) October 1924

***** "Land-Value Policy," by J. D. White, M. A., LL. D., p. 77. Published by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, 11, Tothill St., London, S. W. 1, England. 1924.

(pop. 36,822) at only 30 per cent.*

Furthermore in Saskatchewan, as in Manitoba, no taxes at all are levied on farm buildings, personal property, household effects, machinery or other agricultural improvements, the only local tax paid by farmers throughout the 295 rural municipalities in the province being the tax falling on the value of the bare land.** Buildings used for other than agricultural purposes may of course be assessed although at not more than 60 per cent. of their actual value.

The position in the province of Alberta is practically the same as in Saskatchewan. The towns, villages and cities of Alberta derive some revenue from improvements but mainly from land values while the rural districts collect all their revenue for local purposes from land values exclusively—farm buildings, machinery, household goods, live stock, crops, etc., being entirely exempt.***

In British Columbia both "city" municipalities and "district" municipalities now have local option in taxation subject to the condition (Act of 1919) that they must not assess improvements for taxation at more than 50 per cent of their value. Of the 63 municipalities in the province 29 assess their improvements to

* Saskatchewan, "Department of Municipal Affairs Report" for 1921-22.

** "Saskatchewan's taxation assessments trend towards straight land tax, for, as intimated on many occasions, our municipal law does not lend itself to the penalizing of a man's thrift by making him pay taxes on his personal property, his herds, his barns, or his home. Throughout our 295 rural municipalities the land alone is assessed at its value, while no buildings in hamlets are at all assessable with the exception of elevators situated on non-assessable property such as railway right-of-way. In that case the assessment is more like a fee than a tax, as the owners of the elevator will simply pay \$25 school taxes and \$50 municipal taxes to the secretary-treasurer's office. Otherwise the credit of the municipality, as well as its security, is on the land alone. This fact means much for the solidarity of our rural municipalities and helps to account for the good price so often received for their debentures."—Report of the Department of Municipal Affairs, Saskatchewan.

*** "The tax levy in rural districts in Alberta is made on the valuation of the land only, with the exception of a few districts where a small rate per acre is assessed for municipal purposes, such as the improvement of roads, etc. None of the farmer's equipment or property other than the actual land is assessed, which fact encourages improvement in building and live stock."—From "Canada West," published by the Canadian Government, 1923.

the full extent of the law—that is, at half their value; 7 municipalities assess them at less than half their value; while the remaining 27 municipalities make land value the sole basis of taxation and do not tax improvements at all.*

Vancouver, the largest city, with a population of 117,000, for example, raised in 1922 a revenue of \$5,392,174. Of this sum one-fourth came from improvements and the remainder from land values.** The city of Victoria (pop. 38,727) taxes its improvements at 33 1-3 per cent of their value while on the other hand the city of New Westminster (pop. 14,495) exempts its improvements entirely.***

The principle of the singletax has moreover been recognized in western Canada for purely provincial purposes. Manitoba exempts farm stock and improvements. Saskatchewan levies a special tax on what is called "wild land." Alberta does the same. And so does British Columbia.****

SOUTH AMERICA.

Let us now turn from our neighbor on the north to South America. Here we find further evidence of the healthy growth of the singletax movement. With scarcely any taxes on land to begin with, twelve of the states of Brazil—Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catharina, Para, Parana, Minas Geraes, Matto Grosso, Piahy, Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Sao Paulo, Goyaz and Maranhao—have now adopted to a moderate extent, the principle of taxing land values apart from improvements.*****

Equally good is the headway now being made in the towns, cities and rural districts of Brazil. In 1917 the city of Garibaldi—the first city in South America to do so—abolished the local taxes on its improvements. Its next successor was Montenegro which in 1920 substituted a land value tax for five classes of taxes on business and industry. Following Montenegro in 1922 came Pinheiro Machado which today raises two-thirds of its

* "Report of the Inspector of Municipalities," British Columbia for the year ending December 31, 1922.

** Ibid.

*** "Land-Value Policy," by J. D. White (London), 1924, p. 78.

**** "Land-Value Policy," by J. D. White (London), 1924, pp. 77-78.

***** "Revista Do Imposto Unico," January, 1925. Published at 288 Rua Demetrio Ribeiro, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. See translation in "Land and Liberty" (London), April, 1925.

revenue from land values only. At this writing (1925) the town of Caxias is making the change and the necessary steps are being taken in the towns of Alegrete and Itaqui.*

Of greater significance yet is the legislation just enacted in Porto Alegre, Brazil—a city with a population of 208,000 and the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Under the direction of its mayor, Dr. Octavio da Rocha, the city of Porto Alegre on March 21, 1925, passed an Act establishing a "Cadastral Register" or Valuation Department with sufficient funds, powers and staff for a complete valuation of the city with the particular object in view of concentrating as early as possible the whole municipal revenue burden on the site value of land.**

In the republic of Uruguay a similar activity is going on. For many years the "real property tax" in Uruguay, outside of Montevideo and other municipalities, has been levied on land values exclusively. In Montevideo itself an admirable system of property valuation exists under which land values and improvement values are kept distinct. Although it failed to pass, under the late government in Uruguay a bill was brought in with official support exempting improvements entirely.***

In the Argentine Republic the province of Cordoba has collected the larger portion of its state revenues from the value of rural lands since the year 1914. Having been the only province in the Argentine to enjoy unbroken prosperity since this date, the Cordoba government under Dr. Carcano took steps on April 23, 1925, to apply the same policy in regard to all of its urban lands****—San Francisco (pop. 15,000) being the first city in the province to be "zoned" with this object in view. Similarly the legislature of the state of Buenos Aires (the largest and most populous state in the republic) modified in 1924 the existing graduated tax in rural areas by a complete exemption of all improvements from that tax.

The city of Mendoza (pop. 67,000) in the same republic enacted a law in 1923 to raise approximately eighty per cent of its

* Ibid.

** "Revista Do Imposto Unico," Porto Alegre, Brazil, March, 1925. See translation in "Land and Liberty" (London), July, 1925.

*** Joseph D. Miller in the "Dearborn Independent," March 22, 1924.

**** "Revista Del Impuesto Unico (Esmeralda, 91, Buenos Aires, Argentina), June, 1925.

revenue from land values exclusively, the law to take effect in 1924. Moreover, in 1923 the City Council of the large city of Buenos Aires (pop. 1,750,000) passed, by a vote of 20 to 8, a resolution to transfer the major portion of its municipal revenues from industry and improvements to the value of land.* Unfortunately for this resolution, however, it was later rescinded on the grounds of unconstitutionality.**

So much for the Henry George movement in South America. Although less actual legislation has been secured here than in some other parts of the world, yet the movement on this continent is now gathering a momentum that may soon put it in the lead of other continents. Large and influential journals advocating the singletax have in recent years sprung up in Brazil, Uruguay, and the Argentine Republic; books, pamphlets and circulars are being widely distributed; while a "South American Committee for the Singletax," with the Uruguayan diplomat Dr. Manuel Herrera y Reissig as president and fifty vice-presidents representing the nations of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Equador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, has recently been formed with headquarters in Buenos Aires.*** At the same time governors, mayors and public officials everywhere are growing more friendly to the cause and in a surprisingly large percentage of cases are already giving it their wholehearted backing and support.

EUROPE.

If we pass from South America to Europe we find further proof that the singletax movement of Henry George is steadily gaining ground. Before 1914 the movement had already secured a firm foothold in many European nations but this foothold was all but destroyed and swept away in the great conflagration which broke out in that year. However a reorganization of the movement has now definitely set in, and one or two nations at least have taken the first steps that will blaze the pathway to the final goal.

In France, Belgium, Hungary, Norway, Spain, Holland, Germany, Russia, Italy, Czecho-Slovakia, Switzerland and the Bal-

* "Land and Liberty," December, 1923.

** "Land and Liberty," January, 1924.

*** "Revista Do Imposto Unico," Porto Alegre, Brazil, January, 1925.

kan States, nothing of consequence has been accomplished in the way of getting the land value tax on the statute books, but some very substantial headway in educating the people in this direction has been made. In practically all of these nations, publications, setting forth the singletax principles, have been launched; leagues and organizations to distribute literature and give lectures have been formed; and favorable public sentiment is distinctly on the increase.*

It is worth observing, as we pass, that the large city of Budapest in Hungary made a mild but admirable beginning in land value taxation in 1919. The statute authorizing the tax was carried overwhelmingly by the Town Council on November 7, 1917, was sanctioned in the following month by the Ministers of Home Affairs and of Finance, and the tax was duly assessed, levied and collected for three years—1919, 1920 and 1921. Unfortunately, following the violent political changes and troubles through which the country had passed, not to speak of the Bela Kun revolution, anti-Liberal forces had been in the saddle and a hostile Town Council in 1921 caused the collection of the tax to be suspended. With the further growth of public opinion however this set-back in Hungary can be only temporary.**

Sweden also has some promising legislation to its credit. In Sweden an Act was passed in 1920 whereby all land held by private owners in all cities, towns and urban districts was to be valued separately from improvements for the express purpose of taxing land values to a heavier extent. The valuation was completed in 1922 and, though imperfect, provides a very workable basis for a more rapid advance of the singletax principle in this country.***

England offers a most striking illustration of the vitality of the Henry George movement. In the twenty years preceding the outbreak of the war, the disciples of George in England had grown from a mere handful of people to a group of national im-

* Report of the "International Conference on the Taxation of Land Values," held in Oxford, England, 1923. Published at 11, Tothill Street, London, S. W. 1, England, by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values.

** Report of the "International Conference on the Taxation of Land Values" 1923, p. 45.

*** Ibid. P. 32.

portance. Under the leadership first of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and later Premier Asquith, the road was cleared for the 1909 Budget and the famous Land Campaign of that time. This over, the Land Values Group in Parliament took counsel together and prepared the way for more practical legislation along the right lines. The government introduced measures for revising the valuation of the land and pledged itself both to assess and to tax land values.

But lo! The World War came, scattered the singletax forces and tore to the ground the promising structure they had built up. With the signing of the Armistice, however, the broken ends were gathered together and the construction of a new organization began. Today there is hardly a district in England that does not have its Henry George League where public speakers may be obtained and literature secured. As a result, both the Labor and the Liberal parties now have the taxation of land values definitely in their programs. What is equally significant, in the election of 1923 over 340 candidates personally endorsed the taxation of land values as did 140 members of the existing House of Commons!* No actual legislation of consequence has so far been secured in England, but an early victory may be seen on the horizon.

It is in Denmark that the movement in Europe has made the longest strides. Since the formation of the first Henry George Union in that country in 1902, the growth of sentiment in favor of the singletax has forged ahead at an accelerating pace. Urged by the various singletax bodies, with whom the small farm holders and the House-Tenants' Association had joined, the government of Denmark in 1916 undertook to make a tentative valuation of all land, apart from improvements, for the express purpose of introducing the land value tax. A more scientific separation of the value of the land from the value of the improvements was made in 1920 and again in 1923.

With the valuation of 1920 completed, a law was passed by the Denmark Legislature and signed by the King on August 7, 1922, placing a national tax of one and five-tenths mills on the dollar on the value of all land in the kingdom, the same law reducing the tax on improvements to a corresponding extent. The chief significance of this law is not merely that it marks a small but

* Ibid. Pp. 38-39.

sound beginning in the taxation of land values for national purposes, but that it definitely establishes the machinery for a much larger extension of the same principle for local purposes.* Bills to shift a large share of the local tax burden from improvements to land values in all cities, towns and rural districts in Denmark have already been prepared by the government and are now under debate.**

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that the third World Conference for the Taxation of Land Values has been scheduled to be held in Copenhagen in August of 1926, the second World Conference, with representatives from fourteen nations present, having been held in Oxford, England, in August of 1923.

SOUTH AFRICA.

Turning from Europe to the English speaking provinces of South Africa, we discover an equally steady march towards the singletax principle. Within the last fifteen years the leading provinces in this part of the British Empire have provided for the separate valuation of land and improvements for taxation purposes—the Province of Natal having made such a provision in 1911; the Transvaal in 1912; the Orange Free State in 1913; the Cape of Good Hope Province in 1914; and Southern Rhodesia in 1914.***

Moreover, in each of the above provinces, authority has been granted the local governing bodies to transfer any or all taxation from improvements to land values if they so desire, the result being that a large number of the towns and cities in these states now tax improvements at a much lower rate than land values while many of them do not tax improvements at all.

Thus, in the Province of Natal the city of Durban (pop. 160,000) now taxes its improvements only one-half as heavily as it taxes its land.**** In Southern Rhodesia the city of Bulawayo taxes its improvements one-third as much as its land; the city of Gwelo, one-third; while in Salisbury (the capital) the rate on

* Ibid. Pp. 14-17.

** "Grundskyld," issues of 1924 and 1925. Published by "Den Danske Henry George Forening," Rebekkvæje 47, Hellerup, Denmark.

*** "Land-Value Policy," by James D. White, pp. 78-79.

**** "Land and Liberty," January, 1924.

improvements is only one-seventh of the rate on land.* In the Cape of Good Hope Province again the city of East London taxes its land six times as heavily as it taxes its improvements, while in the neighboring town of Cambridge improvements, since 1919, have been entirely exempt—all the revenue for local purposes in this town being raised from land values exclusively.**

In the Transvaal the situation is even more interesting. Not only have all municipalities and village councils in this province been given the option of untaxing improvements to any extent they desire, but since 1916 they have been obliged by the provincial government to make the tax rate on improvements at least 1d. in the pound less than the tax rate on land. Today, out of the thirty-eight municipalities and village councils in the province, only eight of them still tax improvements at the maximum rate allowed by law, twenty-one others have gone considerably below this maximum, while the remaining nine have eliminated the tax burden on improvements entirely.***

For example, the tax rate in the city of Pretoria (the capital of Transvaal) is 1½d. in the pound on improvements as against 4d. in the pound on land; in the city of Standerton it is 1½d. and 5d. respectively; in Potchefstroom 2d. and 5d.; in Ermelo 1d. and 4d.; in Klerksdorp 2½d. and 5¼d.; in Lydenburg 2d. and 4d.; in Piet Retief 1¾d. and 4½d.; in Pietersburg 2d. and 4½.; in Rustenburg 1d. and 3d.; in Wakkerstroom 2d. and 4d.; and so on.

On the other hand in Benoni, Boksburg, Brakpan, Germiston, Krugersdorp, Springs, Vereeniging, Witbank, and Johannesburg, the tax on improvements has been abolished altogether, the whole local revenue in these cities being raised from land values only. In Johannesburg (pop. 288,000) the land value tax method for raising the local revenue has been in force since 1918, all improvements having been exempt since this time.****

* "Land and Liberty," February, 1924.

** "Land and Liberty," May, 1925.

*** Report, "International Conference on the Taxation of Land Values, 1923, p. 35.

**** "Land and Liberty," May, 1925.

AUSTRALIA.

As in the British provinces of South Africa, so too in Australia — the Henry George movement for a singletax on land values is making steady and continuous progress.

In Australia there has been state taxation of land values in a mild form for many years. South Australia began the system in 1884; New South Wales in 1895; Western Australia in 1907; Tasmania in 1909; Victoria in 1910; and Queensland in 1915. Besides these state taxes there has been an Australian federal tax on land values since 1910. Most of these taxes, however, have had their rates graded according to the amounts of land value held by particular persons and are subject to so many exemptions and abatements that the bulk of the land is not affected by the taxes.*

It is therefore not in state or federal but, as in other parts of the world, in local taxation where the real progress of the single-tax principle in Australia lies. Take first the state of Victoria. Not until very recently were the municipalities and shires in Victoria given power by the State to relieve improvements from taxation and to raise a larger share, or, if they so desire, all of their local revenue from land values. In 1920, however, this power was granted. Since that time twelve municipalities and shires—Caulfield, Oakleigh, Dandenong, Essendon, Camberwell, Coburg, Brunswick, Portland, Newton and Chilwell, Carrum, Rosedale and Yea—have reduced or eliminated entirely the local tax burden on their improvements.**

The state of South Australia offers quite as good an illustration as Victoria but in a different way. Although municipalities (but not the district councils) in South Australia have had the option of shifting the local tax burden from improvements to land values ever since 1893, yet the obstacles placed in the way to block them from doing so have been so great as to be practically insuperable. Notwithstanding these obstacles however, 14 out of the 34 municipalities in South Australia have now managed to change over to the land value tax system. The names of the

* "Land-Value Policy," by James D. White (London), 1924, p. 74.

** "Progress" (18 George Parade, Melbourne, Australia), July, 1924.

towns with the results of the voting at the polls are as follows:*

	For	Against
1907—Thebarton	703	435
1908—Moonta	170	117
1910—Port Adelaide	2,331	421
1910—Hindmarsh	1,003	344
1910—St. Peters	952	352
1910—Mount Gambier	490	306
1911—Glenelg	474	277
1911—Port Pirie	1,225	380
1912—Gawler	179	173
1912—Peterborough	262	117
1912—Quorn	85	20
1913—Yorke town	53	40
1916—Port Augusta	215	13
1922—Port Lincoln	233	36

It is significant to note, in passing, that while all voters in Australia may vote on a proposal to adopt land value taxation, only Landowners may vote to repeal it after two years' operation. In the above towns of South Australia only two of them have been asked to vote on the proposition to return to the old system of taxing improvements and in both cases the proposition was voted down by the landowners themselves by larger majorities than the land value tax system itself received at the hands of all the voters when it was first adopted six years before.**

* "The People's Advocate" (56 Pirie Chambers, Adelaide, S. Australia), May 21, 1924.

** "The Land Values Assessment Act provides that after the system has been in operation for two years in any municipality the citizens have the right of taking a poll with a view to returning to the old system of taxing improvements, if they so desire. Only in two towns have such requests been made. The first was at Thebarton in 1913, six years after land value rating had been adopted. When the poll was taken, the principle was reaffirmed by a bigger majority than was received when the system was adopted in 1907. The majority in favor of retaining land values was 335 in 1913, as against 268 in 1907. The next reversion poll was at Gawler in 1918, and here the majority in favour of retaining land values was 98, as compared with 6 when the principle was first adopted. A special point of interest in connection with these polls is the fact that the Act provides that at a reversion poll the voting is confined solely to LANDOWNERS, whereas, at the adoption poll, owners and tenants are both allowed to vote. Yet after six years' practical operation of the Act we find the owners deciding to retain the land values system by bigger majorities than were cast for the principle when the tenants were also allowed the right to vote."—
"The People's Advocate," 56 Pirie Street, Adelaide, S. Australia) May 1924

In fact, throughout the whole of Australia there is no record of any municipality, town or country district having gone back to the system of taxing industry and improvements after the taxation of land values only had once been tried.*

Had there been any fundamental weakness in the singletax principle it would certainly have disclosed itself long ago in the state of Queensland. In this large Australian state, practical experience with land value taxation runs back for more than thirty years. The policy of exempting certain improvements from taxation was partially recognized in Queensland's law as early as 1879. After this date the policy was frequently extended with such general satisfaction that in 1902 a State Act was passed which provided that all local revenues (except those for the removal of garbage, etc.,) must be levied on land values with improvements wholly exempt.**

Thus for more than twenty years in Queensland all towns, boroughs, country districts and municipalities (including Brisbane and suburbs with a population of 230,000) have been exempting improvements entirely from taxation and raising their local revenues from land values only.*** And this with no popular desire whatever for a return to the old system but with a constantly growing demand in the new way.

The status of the Henry George movement in the state of New South Wales is about the same as it is in Queensland. Although agitation for the singletax on land values began almost as early in New South Wales as it did in Queensland, yet it took a much longer period of time before state authority to apply it

* "No place in Australia that has had experience of Rating on Land Values has ever gone back to the old system."—"Progress," (18 George Parade, Melbourne, Australia) July, 1925.

** Report, "International Conference on the Taxation of Land Values," 1923, p. 34.

*** Writing in the Melbourne "Progress" of August, 1924, regarding the adoption of the land value tax system in Queensland, the Hon. H. F. Hardacre of Brisbane states:

"Governments have since come, and Governments (including Conservatives) have gone, but none has ever proposed to revert to the old and unscientific method of imposing rates on Improvements as well as Land Values. . . . I can say unhesitatingly that whoever would be convinced of the beneficial results of the method of rating upon the Value of the Land only, and the exemption of Improvements from taxation, need only pay a visit to Brisbane and see the system with all its excellent consequences, in operation in actual fact in this State."

for local purposes was obtained. In 1906, however, the Local Government Act was passed, which compelled the shires and municipalities to raise a larger amount of their revenue from land values apart from improvements and which also made it optional for them to extend the principle if they so desired. The taxing provisions of the Act became operative in the shires or rural districts in 1907 and in the municipalities in 1908.*

Since this time the system of taxing land values for local purposes has spread so rapidly throughout New South Wales that today, out of a total of 137 country municipalities in the state, 112 raise their local revenue entirely from land values, while out of the 134 rural districts in the state, all but 3 raise their revenue entirely from land values.** Moreover, of the 25 municipalities that do not "rate on unimproved values" as they say in Australia, about two-thirds of their revenue is collected from land values and only about one-third from improvement values.

Thus in New South Wales as in Queensland the singletax doctrine of Henry George is steadily gaining ground.*** Not only is there no desire on the part of the citizens to revert to the old system of taxing improvements but the demand is definitely growing to have all taxes—federal and state as well as local—deflected from the fruits of human industry to the value of the bare land.

Before leaving New South Wales, the city of Sydney with its

* Report, "International Conference on the Taxation of Land Values," 1923, p. 61.

** Ibid. P. 62.

*** "In New South Wales where all the councils now raise their ordinary rates by taxing land values only, there is a strong agitation to get the water and sewerage rate levied on the same basis. Twenty-three municipal and shire councils have petitioned Parliament for power to levy water and sewerage rates on this basis. Fifty-nine progress associations have also petitioned Parliament for such power to be given to the councils. In addition, twenty-six trade unions and twenty-seven other public bodies, including branches of the National Association, Labour Electoral Councils, Chambers of Commerce, W.C.T.U., Taxpayers' Association, etc., have also petitioned Parliament for such power to be given. In 1923 one hundred and thirty-six petitions were presented to the N. S. W. Parliament in favor of rating on land values only for water and sewerage. This shows a very healthy forward movement and there is no agitation whatever to go back to the old system of taxing improvements."—W. B. King in the Melbourne "Progress," June, 1924.

present population of more than 1,100,000 souls (including suburban), should be mentioned. In Sydney, land value taxation to a moderate extent, dates from the year 1908, and since the year 1916 all of the municipal taxes (excepting those levied by the Water and Sewerage Board) have been raised from land values and none from improvements.*

NEW ZEALAND

Let us pass from Australia over to New Zealand. Here also we find the singletax theory of Henry George to be making uninterrupted progress. While there had been some activity in favor of taxing land values apart from improvements in New Zealand as early as 1880 (the year after "Progress and Poverty" was published) it was not until 1891 that the movement began in real earnest. Five years later (1896) local option in taxation was given to all cities, boroughs, counties and town districts in the Dominion. One year following this (1897), Palmerston North—a borough with a present population of 15,649 and the first borough in New Zealand to do so—availed itself of its privilege and exempted its improvements from all local taxation.

Since this time over one-half of the local governing bodies in the Dominion have followed the same course. Forty-seven counties out of a total of 125, and 68 boroughs out of a total of 118, in addition to 87 town, road, river-protective and land-drainage districts, now raise their local revenues entirely by taxing land values and exempting all improvements.** This includes the large cities of Wellington and Christchurch, both of which adopted the land value tax system over twenty years ago as well as the city of Wanganui (pop. 24,000) which came into the fold in the early part of 1925.***

Following are the counties, boroughs and leading town districts in New Zealand that have transferred the local tax burden

* The increasing satisfaction that the singletax system has given Sydney since its adoption ten years ago has been excellently set forth in an address delivered in England in May, 1925, by Alderman John R. Firth of Sydney. The address has been reprinted in part in the author's book "False Education in our Colleges and Universities," chapter V.

** Report, "International Conference for the Taxation of Land Values," 1923, pp. 59-61.

*** "The Liberator," (101 Victoria Arcade, Auckland, N. Z.), May 1925

from improvements to land values since the year 1897.*

CITIES, COUNTIES, BOROUGHS AND LEADING TOWN DISTRICTS
IN NEW ZEALAND THAT HAVE TRANSFERRED THE LOCAL
TAX BURDEN FROM IMPROVEMENTS TO THE VALUE OF
LAND DURING THE PAST 28 YEARS

1897—Palmerston N. Borough (Pop. 1921—15,649)	Winton Borough
Pahiatua Borough	Invercargill Borough (Pop. 1921—15,203)
Normanby Town District	Te Puke Town District
1898—Waipawa County	1902—Wairarapa Sth. County
Waipukurau County	Southland County
Dannevirke County	Stratford Borough
Woodville County	Christchurch City (Pop. 1923—113,400)
Inangahua County	Balclutha Borough
Murchison County	Sth. Invercargill Borough
Cheviot County	Dunsden Town District
Woodville Borough	1903—Waimarino County
Waipawa Borough	Kaitake County
Waipukurau Borough	Hawera Borough
Greymouth Borough	Ohakune Borough
1899—Hokianga County	Raetihi Borough
1900—Eketahuna County	Picton Borough
Waimate County	Blenheim Borough
Devonport Borough (Pop. 1921—8,761)	Rangautaua Town District
Pelorus Road District	1904—Buller County
1901—Raglan County	Westport Borough
Tauranga County	West Harbour Borough
Stratford County	Bluff Borough
Whangamomona County	1905—Hobson County
Pahiatua County	Kawhia County
Hamilton Borough (Pop. 1921—11,441)	Awakino County
Feilding Borough	Kairanga County
Foxton Borough	Akitio County
Wellington City (Pop. 1923—112,070)	Takaka County
Masterton Borough (Pop. 1921—7,820)	Awatere County
Lower Hutt Borough	Dargaville Borough
Hokitika Borough	Petone Borough (Pop. 1921—7,978)
Sumner Borough	1906—Eastbourne Borough
Waimate Borough	1907—Dannevirke Borough
Gore Borough	Eketahuna Borough
	1908—Piako County
	Morrinsville Borough

* See "The Liberator" of April 2, 1922, and subsequent issues.

Featherston Borough	(Pop. 1921—7,073)
New Brighton Borough	Huntly Town District
1909—Opotiki County	1916—Ellerslie Town District
Weber County	Raglan Town District
Ngaruawahia Borough	1917—None
Hastings Borough	1918—Mangaorongo Road District
(Pop. 1921—9,115)	Waikatarua Drainage District
1910—Wairoa Borough	1919—Whakatane County
1911—Ohura County	Manawatu County
Taumarunui Borough	Cambridge Borough
Gisborne Borough	Thames Borough
(Pop. 1921—10,931)	Paeroa Borough
1912—Waikohu County	Whakatane Borough
Opotiki Borough	New Plymouth Borough
Marton Borough	(Pop. 1921—11,395)
St. Kilda Borough	Taihape Borough
(Pop. 1921—6,084)	Otaki Borough
Mosgiel Borough	Carterton Borough
Riverton Borough	1920—Bay of Islands County
1913—Thames County	Kawa County
Collingwood County	Taranaki County
Whangarei Borough	Mangapapa Town District
Birkenhead Borough	Tarradale Town District
Te Kuiti Borough	Havelock N. Town District
Napier Borough	1921—Rodney County
(Pop. 1921—14,346)	Hauraki Plains County
Hikurangi Town District	Inglewood County
Waverley Town District	Timaru Borough
Gonville Town District	(Pop. 1921—14,058)
Johnsonville Town District	Geraldine Borough
Upper Hutt Town District	Manurewa Town District
1914—Mongonui County	1922—Otamatea County
Whangarei County	1923—Avondale Borough
Gt. Barrier Is. County	Glen Elden Town District
Otahuhu Borough	Henderson Town District
Runanga Borough	New Lynn Town District
Riccarton Borough	1924—Tauranga Borough
Martinborough Town District	Taupo Road District
Otorohanga Town District	1925—Wanganui City
Otane Town District	(First 5 moa.) (Pop. 1923
1915—Featherston County	—23,523)
Onehunga Borough	

It is worth noting in this connection, that out of the 202 governing bodies in New Zealand that, during the past twenty-eight years, have adopted the system of taxing land values for local purposes, only sixteen polls on the question of going back to the

system of taxing improvements have been taken, and of these sixteen polls only five have been successful.*

Such, then, is the status of the singletax movement at the present time. In no country has the full theory as yet been applied, but public sentiment in favor of it is steadily and continuously increasing. Since the publication of "Progress and Poverty" by Henry George in 1879 the singletax idea has taken root in practically every civilized nation on the globe; it has been adopted for local purposes either in whole or in part in nine of the large cities of the world; while in the various rural districts, municipalities, states and nations where the entering wedge of the reform has been inserted, live more than sixty millions of people!

* "The Liberator," April, 1922, p. 4.

