

WHAT IS THE SINGLE TAX?**(For the Review.)*

By DANIEL KIEFER.

Adam Smith in his "Wealth of Nations" referred to the absence of want in what were then the British Colonies of North America. He also showed the cause of this state of affairs. He said it was due to the easy access the colonists had to the vast natural resources of the country.

These same natural resources exist today and on account of progress in invention, and increase of population, are capable of far greater productivity than in Adam Smith's time. But the workers no longer have the easy access they once had because the land has almost entirely become private property.

The contrast between the distribution of wealth among us today and what it was when the country was still new may be shown by the testimony of many others besides Adam Smith. It all clearly shows land monopoly to be the main cause of poverty and all its resulting evils.

The way to cure an evil is to remove its cause. Poverty can be abolished by destroying its cause—land monopoly—and the Single Tax is the easiest method by which this result can be accomplished. The public appropriation of ground rent will secure the common right of all men to the use of the earth even though existing legal titles be not disturbed. A tax on land values equal to the annual rental value is all that is necessary to make land for all practical purposes common property. At the same time, the abolition of all other forms of taxation would remove another obstruction to industry. The abolition of these taxes, leaving the tax on land values the only one for the raising of all public revenues, is what we mean by the Single Tax.

With the Single Tax in operation the owner of unused or only partially used land would find himself put to heavy expense for the pleasure of claiming title to certain parts of the earth's surface. If he could not or would not make this title a means of giving him enough revenue to pay the tax, he would in all probability drop it and leave the land to some one who both would and could make it sufficiently productive to pay the tax.

Besides making natural opportunities accessible to labor, the Single Tax would be fatal to all the trusts and monopolies that depend either on land monopoly or some form of unjust taxation for support. When it is borne in mind that under it there will be neither protective tariff nor revenue tariff; that there will be no internal revenue duties; no local or state taxes, either direct or indirect on industry or its products, it should be easy to see that the trusts now fostered by one or more of these forms of special privilege will have lost their power to monopolize the industries they now control.

The Single Tax is, in short, the most practical method of social redemption.

*This article, one of a series which the REVIEW will continue to run, is shorter than those that have preceded it. But it is an admirable statement of our principles. Its author, Mr. Daniel Kiefer, is chairman of the Joseph Fels Fund Commission, a successful business man, and an earnest and able exponent of our doctrines.—Editor SINGLE TAX REVIEW.