

Recalls Thomas Spence

A PROBLEM clearly stated is more than half solved. That problem, the Economic Problem, the Labor Problem, the Social Problem—the name matters not—it is the thing itself that counts—was clearly stated by Lincoln, back in 1858 when he said:

“That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country long after our poor tongues have been silent forever. It is the eternal struggle between Right and Wrong. It is the Spirit that says, ‘You toil and work and earn bread and I’ll eat it.’”

How true! The poor do all the hard, rough work, while the rich do not work at all, although they have abundance. They get without labor what the masses of the people earn without getting. How do they get it? Simply by crooked taxation! As Goldsmith says, “Laws rob the poor while rich men make the laws.” He also says, “The robes that wrap their limbs in silken sloth, have robbed the neighboring fields of half their growth.”

The man who first solved this problem in America was Henry George when he wrote, “Progress and Poverty” or Increase of Want with the Increase of Wealth, and the remedy, the Single Tax Idea.

All objections against it are answered in the book itself long before the objections are made.

But George was not the first to see that poverty has its root in crooked taxation that takes from the mouth of labor the bread it earns, instead of taking or taxing the unearned increment of Land Values. Back in 1795, there was an Englishman, an ex-teacher and a member of the Philosophical Society of Newcastle, Thomas Spence, who saw the same truth. Of him, some poet wrote:

“All Nature’s laws, he freely, clearly scanned
And found the summum bonum in the land.
He found that Justice, rooted in the earth,
Gave men new Rights and Liberty new birth.
That man, that Honest man, was Thomas Spence,
Whose genius, judgment, wit and common sense
Confounded all the learning of the schools,
And showed that statesmen are but learned fools;
That priests preach future worlds of joy and bliss,
To rob the weak and cheat the poor in this.
Or else their motto and their cry would be
‘Let all be equal and let all be free!’”

That’s it! Equal so far as all having an interest in the earth, the land, the source of Jobs, of Wealth, of Life, of everything, and the Single Tax as fast as we can get it, little by little, will restore to the proletariat, the disinherited, their interest in the earth.

Let those who see this great truth, preach it, teach it, get people thinking about it, discussing it till all shall see it. Let none falter who thinks he is in the Right for only the Truth can set us Free.

W. D. LAMB, in the *Hobo News*.