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Henry George addresses a fine audience in London Canada

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A large audience, composed of thoughtful and observant men and women, greeted Henry George, the single tax apostle and writer on questions of political economy, at the grand opera house last night. It was an audience clearly composed of the "thinkers" of the city, and, from the number of questions asked the speaker at the close, it also included many who were evidently a little doubtful of the efficacy of single taxation as a panacea for all human economic woes.

The lecture was a rich intellectual treat, and was equally enjoyed by the ladies as well as the men. It was of an hour and a half duration, but at the close of the lecture another hour was devoted to answering questions from the audience, which came faster and faster, until Mr. George had to draw the line and bid good night to listeners, who were unwilling to depart.

Mr. George C Gibbons occupied the chair and in briefly introducing Mr. George bespoke for him a fair and intelligent hearing, and for the audience a mental treat and a masterly elusation of the principles of single tax.

Mr. George was warmly received, and evidently began with the greater part of his hearers favorable to his theory. They applauded frequently, and once in a while an abstracted man with his chin resting on his hands on the balcony railing, would give vent to an exclamation such as "That's the point. That's so." and then draw back hurriedly as the audience would turn to seek him out.

#### TAXATION THE SUBJECT

Mr. George's subject was "taxation," and he began by characterizing taxation as the most important function of government, and the government's power to tax only people living in certain areas controlled by it, and then went on to speak of the method employed in managing those large and many storied buildings in the United States, where the landlords did not make all sorts of charges upon their tenants such as for the use of elevator, for fire, for light, etc., but simply made one charge -- for rent. "Now," said Mr. George, "what is best in that case for the individual, must certainly be best for the community, as a means of raising the largest revenue with the least cost, the least expense and the least waste. This single charge upon the rental commands itself to individuals; why should it not to the community?"

"That there is certainly the simplest mode, the best mode, and the least wasteful mode of raising revenue is clear. Customs taxes are always liable to evasion. They always involve the keeping up of a great staff of officials, searchers and seizers. And even then they are not and cannot be fully and fairly collected. Yet the loss to the community, to the people, to the ultimate payers of the taxes, is much more than that which goes to the government. There is not merely a loss of the expenses of collecting we're trying to collect, those taxes; there is also the loss to the community of the expense incurred in trying to evade them. And their nature is of that most wasteful form of collecting revenue -- that of farming the revenue."

“The man who directly pays each tax simply shifts them to the next hands. The importer pays to the government, but the importer charges to the wholesale merchant not merely the cost of his goods, not merely the cost of the toil and trouble involved in paying the taxes, but that tax itself, and the profit upon the tax. \$1,000 worth of goods cost in taxation \$500. Then the importer must collect the profit not upon \$1,000 worth of capital, but upon \$1,500 worth. So the wholesaler must make such a charge to the retailer, a charge not merely on what he has bought, but on the profits on a larger amount, and when they are finally bought by the consumer he bears all those taxes.”

“In the next place such taxes vary must check production, very much increase the inequality of distribution. They fall with great weight upon those least able to bear them, they take much more than that which goes for the purposes of public revenue, and they foster all kinds of corruption, inevitably to corrupt the government, to lessen the control of the masses of the people. Take the example which the United States, Here two houses of Congress are at present elected upon a clear mandate of the people to reduce taxation. They have not done so. Almost a very last act is to impose again a tax of 5 million dollars upon the people of the United States for the benefit of a few Louisiana sugar planters, who had subscribed a million dollars. That is the history of pure legislation in the United States. Even after such a mandate we found it utterly impossible with this Congress to even do away with that robbery of the sugar trust, where millions of dollars are taken from the people for no purpose whatever than to put Millions into the hands of bribers and corruptionists.”

“It has grown with our growth, it must continue so long as the present system of taxation is continued. And we never can get rid of it until the people clearly express their will that there shall be no more taxation or custom houses. We must sweep the whole thing away. So it is less degree the taxes which we levy for purposes of state and municipal revenue. The greater part of our local taxes are levied in a tax on real estate -- land and the buildings upon it. Now, that part of the taxes which falls upon the buildings and improvements is not paid by the first payers of the taxes, unless they happen to be the users of the land or buildings that are taxed. That part which falls upon the buildings is necessarily and inevitably shifted by the payer of the taxes to the user. Simply law -- the law of competition, where a tax increases the power of him on whom it falls to shift it, to levy it again upon someone else, it must always be paid by the user or consumer. It never rests upon the first payer. Those taxes choke production, promote corruption and cost the people much more than the government receives.”

“Now as a mere matter of collecting the largest revenue with the least cost, with the least evasion, with the least fraud or perjury, if the state were to resolve to adopt the plan which individuals have found the best to collect revenue, by one single tax or, rather from one single source of taxation -- the value of land -- it could collect the largest revenue with the least cost and the least injury. No tax upon the products of labor, no tax upon the wealth in any of its forms, must check this production of wealth.”

“We all want more wealth. Why, then, should we kill the goose that lays the golden egg by taxing people for producing wealth? We may tax land values to their full amount. We cannot lessen the production of wealth. Land is not a thing of human production. Land is created, not produced. All the land there is, is here; all the land there can be is here. No taxation upon the value of land will lessen the amount of land. No taxation upon land, upon land values, can fall upon the user of land; make it any more difficult to get land to use. For this reason, that the

value of land, the rent of land -- what is called by the economist rent -- never can go to the user, always must go to the owner. By taxing land values we would make it even easier for those who want to use land to get land to use. For this reason, that when land yielded no profit to the mere owner, no one would want land unless he wanted to use it. And the temptation would be gone to get land and hold land without using it, in the expectation of profiting by the general growth of the community. And that monopolistic ownership, that speculative value in land, that puts that artificial value upon it, that acts precisely as an actual scarcity of land, would be gone. That is the simple, common sense way of living - - a way that we call the single tax."

"What we mean by the single tax is that there shall be but one source of revenue, applied for purposes of raising public revenue -- that value which the economist call rent. And it's popular name it is known as ground rent. The value which attaches to rent, especially to improvements upon it, or the use to which it is put. But there is a deeper side to the question than this fiscal side.

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Mr. George then devoted the second half of his address to a picture of the social evils of the present day, and explain how this method of single tax would remedy them.