

Objection and Reproof

Editor, *The New York Times Book Review*:

I wish to object to certain statements made by William MacDonald in his review of "The Philosophy of Henry George" by George Raymond Geiger. Mr. MacDonald could not resist the temptation to voice his own personal opinion of Henry George's ethical economy, and while he asserts with all the confidence in the world that Henry George could not "meet the facts," and that when he proclaimed that poverty was a natural outcome of the private appropriation of land value in economic rent he showed "the essential superficiality of his diagnosis," he himself is guilty of the very faults he believes he sees in Henry George's reasoning.

Great men from time to time attest to the soundness of the doctrine of the single tax. I am ready to name them if Mr. MacDonald wishes. The violent opposition to such men by the great landowners is sufficient proof of the fear single tax begets in the hearts of the privileged. The very fact that but a portion of the economic rent was to be taken in England by the Snowden bill was the cause of the fall of the Labor Ministry and the elevation of Snowden to the House of Lords, where he would be powerless. But this is just in passing. Mr. MacDonald thinks it would be a waste of time to attempt a refutation on economic grounds of the Georgian theory. It would not only be a waste of time to attempt it, but an utter impossibility. It would be a waste of time not because Mr. MacDonald suggests that the theory "no longer finds defense save among a dwindling remnant of single-taxers," nor because it "has long since been dead," but because it is based upon natural law first shown to us by Ricardo and more fully explained by Henry George. If Mr. MacDonald doubts this, let him attempt it.

In further keeping with facts, let us inform Mr. MacDonald that the theory is defended by an increasing number of young people, the students of various schools of social science. These schools are increasing in number and are patterned after the pioneer in this field, the Henry George School of Social Science, chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. The Schalkenbach Foundation is continually printing "Progress and Poverty" and other works of Henry George. Is it to be believed that these books are in demand to replace the worn-out copies of the dwindling numbers of single-taxers? Or are people buying them out of idle curiosity? Mr. MacDonald calls the single tax a "panacea." Facts, where are you? Where has single tax ever been tried to justify Mr. MacDonald's use of the word "panacea"?

The irrefutable logic of the proposition points to a remedy because the cause will have been removed. The proof is impossible without a trial.

It is true that a galaxy of minor writers of textbooks on economics have to their own or to their employers' satisfaction demolished the theory of single tax. Perhaps the greatest of these is Seligman. He goes to some length to do so. The average textbook on economics does little justice to the theory, dismissing with a word or two the whole philosophy. We are now at a pass in civilization where the young mind is not content with the dicta of college professors and so-called economists. They know that the old order has brought us to a mess that the defenders of the old order are powerless to get us out of or to explain. One fact is that single tax has had no part in this collapse. Another fact is that this débâcle is just what Henry George told us to expect, and with all the facts at our command since 1873-1878 the truth of George's is only too plain to those seeking with honest desire the relation of cause and effect.

The superficiality is not to be laid at the door of Henry George, but at the feet of those who, like Mr. MacDonald, are so hog-tied with economic fallacies accepted as truths by the mass of the American people since the Civil War and the advent of our present protective tariff system that they do not understand that the former prosperity of this country was founded upon free land upon which any settler so desiring could employ himself, and that with the disappearance of such land began the periods of industrial depressions. They have not yet been able to see that recovery from former depressions was accelerated by the taking up of the still public domain. With the decrease of the public domain the depressions lasted longer. Now, with practically no public domain left, we are still in a depression that began four years ago. Does Mr. MacDonald know how we are to get out of it?

In August, 1925, there appeared in the *International Book Review* an article by Mr. MacDonald in criticism of a book, "The Real Trouble With the Farmers," by Herbert Quick. Mr. Quick was not only a single taxer but a "dirt farmer," and certainly knew more about the plight of farmers than most men, even including Senator George Arthur Capper, who is accepted as an authority on farming. Mr. MacDonald showed his disbelief in single tax by his closing sentence. He declared that Mr. Quick had not answered his own question because the remedy of a single tax on land values was so little likely to be applied in any calculable future, and then he suggested that

some one might write a book on "The Real Remedy for the Farmer's Troubles." Eight years have passed since then. Many remedies have been tried, but not the one suggested by Mr. Quick. I ask Mr. MacDonald if he has not marshaled enough facts upon which to base a remedy for the troubles of the farmer and the rest of us that will be more just than the remedy known as the single tax. If he has, the world awaits it. If not, he owes it to the readers of *THE TIMES BOOK REVIEW* and to single-taxers everywhere to admit that as to the efficacy of the remedy proposed by Henry George he does not know.

Dr. Geiger has performed a great service to a great man and to mankind in general. The subject of his great effort is based upon too strong a foundation for the sappers and miners who use opinions and prejudices for facts.

JOHN LUXTON,
Associate Director of the Henry
George School of Social Science.
Brooklyn, N. Y.