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Single Tax Victories in England

By Louis F. Post

THE ENGLISH VICTORIES.

Over the result of the British elections, Single Taxers everywhere have good reason for rejoicing. More emphatically than anything else they were Single Tax victories.

They were Single Tax victories in their revival of free trade principles, for on its fiscal side the Single Tax involves freedom of exchange; and international free trade is a long stride in that direction. They were Single Tax victories also in their declaration for the taxation of land values, for on its agrarian side the Single Tax looks to the abolition of land monopoly; and the taxation of land values under the circumstances prevailing in England is a long stride in that direction.

It is true enough as to the taxation of land values that if England were to get in this respect all that her voters at these elections asked for, she would get no more than [towns] of the United States already have. But we have it only because the fiscal theory that prevails with us demands the taxation of everything of value. Not so with our English cousins. They now demand the taxation of land values on the ground that these values are social values and therefore belong to society. What if they do not take them all? What if they do continue taxing other values? What if the fiscal effect is the same there as here? The moral effect is radically different, and the effect upon public opinion is radically different. Whereas we are taxing land values merely because they belong in the general category of values, the English have decided to begin taxing them because they are common property. Whereas public opinion with us has not been directed to this natural and just source of public revenues, public opinion in England has been directed to that very point. Whereas with us keeping on is to reach out for more and more drastic methods for taxing all values, keeping on is with them to get nearer and nearer to taxing land values alone.

But while the English parliamentary victories are thus most gratifying as Single Tax victories in which we can all rejoice, let us not be misled into supposing that it is only in England that the Single Tax movement is forging ahead. Reasons are abundant for believing that it is already as far if not farther ahead in the United States than in England. It may seem to have made greater advances in England because the people there are more completely divorced from the land than they are here. There is no common land there; there is still some common land here. Vacant land is not taxed there; it is taxed here. In these conditions the land question in England stands out by name in bold relief, whereas in the United States the land question is masked in questions having other names.

In our national politics we have the rail-road question, rather than the question of a depopulated country side; and in our local politics the monopolization of our thorough-fares is a more generally obvious evil than the housing of the poor. But these questions involve the land question, and sooner or later we shall come to it in our practical politics. Single Tax issues are as insistent here as in England, but they are without the Single Tax label, are more subtle in their environment, and withal are perhaps in fact even if not in appearance somewhat farther advanced. In our public utilities controversies we are making both Single Tax issues and Single Tax advocates.

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