

The Single Tax versus Social Democracy.

We are indebted to the Twentieth Century Press, Limited, for a reproduction in pamphlet form of the debate between Henry George and H. M. Hyndman. We congratulate the publishers on the production of this pamphlet, and think it will prove useful to those who wish to know the exact difference between the views of representative Single Taxers and Socialists. We are not the less pleased because we have been often assured by our Socialist friends that Mr. George had not made a very good show in the debate, and because we find on perusal of the pamphlet that this is simply a repetition of the old tendency of mistaking prejudices for facts, and of the wish being father to the thought.

So far as the Single Tax position is concerned, we feel it has nothing to fear from an impartial reading of the pamphlet, and we shall be pleased to recommend it on every available occasion.

Perhaps, as Single Taxers and admirers of Henry George, we have something to complain about in the introduction to the pamphlet. This is written by Mr. H. M. Hyndman, and is naturally coloured by his prejudices, and a good deal might have been allowed for that. There is, however, one thing which we think is inexcusable, and that is where Mr. Hyndman allows his vanity to run riot with his judgment, and begins to patronise a man who was in no sense his inferior.

This latter fault, of course, we do not attribute to his belief in Collectivism, but to his environment. When Mr. George sent his book to the late Duke of Argyll, he did so in the belief that the Duke was a man who had risen superior to his circumstances, and a similar belief is not unnatural in regard to Mr. Hyndman. But if such is expected the expectation will be doomed to woeful disappointment. We have from Mr. Hyndman a parade of the same pedantry that we are accustomed to find from those who refer to "their college days at Cambridge."

Mr. Hyndman should surely know by this time that the generation which has risen superior to creeds, superstitions, and vested interests is not likely to be influenced by the thin bluff of a University badge.

This is how Mr. Hyndman speaks of Mr. George:—
"I knew George well. When he and his family first came to this country they stayed for some weeks with my wife and myself. I then had numerous private conversations with him in which I learnt how strangely limited his capacity was. It amazed me to find that he was quite unable to see an inch beyond his land-taxation theory. Capitalism and competition remained almost sacred for him. He showed this, I think, most clearly in the discussion between us published in the *Nineteenth Century*. It was this also which so terribly misled him in after years, and brought him into political connections which his friends could not but deplore. He was essentially a good, earnest, simple man, possessed of no profundity of thought, but with a delightful character, who was wholly unspoiled by his phenomenal literary success, and believed that he was working as effectively as he certainly was honestly for the benefit of his fellow-men."

He further informs us that Karl Marx, in talking to him of Mr. George's proposal, referred to it as "the Capitalist's last ditch."

What nonsense from one who claims not to be simple-minded. If Mr. George came to the Capitalists we can only say that the Capitalists received him not.

But, perhaps, Mr. Hyndman misunderstood Karl Marx. If he will look up the last chapter of "Das Capital" he will find that Mr. George's proposal is emphasised in the story of Mr. Peel and the Swan River Colony.

So much for the introduction, let us now turn to the debate.

Take the following from Mr. George's first speech:—
"Mr. Hyndman styles himself a Social-Democrat: I a Single Tax man. Let me state why we have adopted that name and what we mean by it. Looking over the civilised world to-day, we see that labour nowhere gets its just dues. (Hear, hear.) We see there is everywhere a fringe of unemployed labour. We see all the phenomena that are called sometimes over-production and industrial depression; we reject as superficial the theory that this is caused by there being too many people; that this is caused by

there not being enough work; that this is caused by the multiplication of labour-saving machinery. We say that until human wants are satisfied there can be no such thing as over-production—(applause)—that until all have enough there is yet plenty of work. (Hear, hear.) We trace the cause of all these phenomena to one great fundamental wrong. We ask what work is, and we see what we call productive work is alteration in place or in form of the raw material of the universe that we call land. We see that man is a land animal; that his very body comes from the land; that all his productions consist in but the working up of the land; and that land to him is absolutely necessary; and we behold everywhere the phenomena of which I have spoken. We see everywhere that this element, indispensable to all, has been made the property of some. (Hear, hear.) To that wrong we trace all the great social evils of which we complain to-day, and we propose to right them by going to the root and removing that wrong."

Put against the above the following from Mr. Hyndman's last speech:—

"The railways are now organised by directors on behalf of corporations which have neither souls to be damned nor bodies to be kicked; we maintain that they should be organised under the whole community, which will then be a democratic industrial community, no longer dominated and dictated to, but able to turn out the present directors who trample upon them and to put in those whom they can control. (Cheers.) Then there are the mines, which at this present moment might just as well be organised by the workers, they themselves electing their own directors. (Hear, hear.) The same thing applies to the factories. To-day you have the most complete organisation of the workers in production and the most terrible anarchy in exchange. We see boot manufacturers throwing out as many boots as they possibly can on the market for the sake of profit—not for use. (Hear, hear.) Then when they have in this way brought about a glut in the market, they throw the men out of employment, and you have men and women going without boots because, forsooth, there are too many boots! (Loud applause.) There are men going hatless because there are too many hats, and coatless because there are too many coats. (Cheers.) We would restore by the co-operation of all, in a State not dominated and dictated to by the capitalist and the landlord, but in an organised industrial community, order in place of this chaos which at the present moment is prevailing all over the civilised world."

We should have been better pleased to take Mr. Hyndman's confession of faith from his first speech, but we are unable to find it there. What we do get is a negation of the importance of the land question, and we are pleased to notice that Mr. Hyndman—to use his own phrase—kicks himself downstairs in his last speech. When he comes to look for industries of any magnitude he is sent back to the land: to the mines and the railways. What is the value of the capital of a mine or railway compared with the value of the land? Besides the value of the capital is threatened by accidents, whereas the value of the land remains constant with the existence of the community.

We are pleased to note further that Mr. Hyndman confesses to a belief in the Over-Production theory, as we fancy he would have denied such a belief if we had accused him of holding it.

We would call attention to Mr. Hyndman's statement that we have to-day "the most complete organisation of the workers in production, and the most terrible anarchy in exchange." We would point out that this is not an argument for altering the organisation of industry, but an argument for making provision that the wealth produced shall be distributed in a fairer way.

When we seek to accomplish this we have no hesitation in putting our practical proposal in opposition to anything the Collectivist has to propose.

We submit the following from Mr. George's second and third speeches:—

"I do not take the same view of labour that our friends of the Social-Democratic Federation do. They seem to have taken hokus bolus the arguments of the old political economists who were writing for the purpose of proving that the poor you must always have with you. ('No!') They seem to have accepted as a natural law that the actual wages of labour are merely what the labourer can subsist on. They seem to have given capital the first place in the order of production. Capital does not come first. Land and labour are the only two absolutely necessary factors to the production of wealth. (Hear, hear.) Capital is the child of labour exerted upon land. (Cheers.) Give labour access to land and it will produce capital. Give labour access to land and the power of the capitalists to grind the masses must disappear. (Hear, hear.) What does that power come from? Merely from the fact that men are unable to employ themselves upon the land. It is the poverty

of the labourers, not the wealth of the capitalist, which is the evil to be removed. Mr. Hyndman quarrels with competition. (Hear, hear.) He wants to abolish it, but to abolish competition would be to abolish freedom. (Loud applause and cries of 'No, no,') How can you abolish competition except by saying to man, 'Thou shalt not'? How can you abolish competition save by preventing men from doing what they have a perfect right to do—('No, no, and hear, hear!')—and what it is for the interest of the community that they should do?"

"There is in capital no power to oppress labour; capital is not the employer of labour; labour is the employer of capital. (Applause.) That is the natural order; labour came before capital could be; it is labour produces capital; there is no particle of capital that can properly be styled capital that labour has not been exerted to produce. (Hear, hear.) Give labour land; let it get it on equal terms; secure to the labourer the reward of his exertions, and the distinction between the labourer and the capitalist will pass away. With the increase in the wages of labour, if there be great organisations of capital they must necessarily be co-operative organisations in which labour shall have its full share and its full right."

Compare with the foregoing the following from Mr. Hyndman's first and second speeches:—

"We say that competition for profit produces more degradation than any form of production the world has ever seen. He leaves competition untouched. The labourer who goes to the factory or dockyard gates now begging for work would have to go to the factory gates under the same conditions if the Single Tax proposals were carried out. I maintain that the miserable wage-slaves would be in precisely the same state ten years hence after rent had been confiscated as they are at the present moment, and that the only people who would benefit would be the Rothschilds, the Barings, the Chamberlains, the Mundellas, and such people who pile up great fortunes out of the workers of to-day. (Applause.) Very well; that would be so, and I challenge contradiction upon it. I ask how can the Single Tax be a remedy? What is the reason of this terrible number of unemployed, and the existence of which we both deplore? Mr. George says it is on account of the land not being taxed. But mark here again, he does not propose to relieve the land of rent. He simply proposes to transfer that rent to the State, and, therefore, the man who desires to go upon the land will have to go upon it with a deduction for the purpose of getting upon it precisely the same as he has to-day. He does not propose to relieve him from rent, and I do not say that under competition it is just that he should. But how is the labourer to get at the land?"

"The question is will Social-Democracy benefit the people? I am glad the word 'people' has been used, because I maintain that it will benefit not merely the working classes but the capitalists and middle classes also, whose interest Mr. George, it appears to me, is so anxious to defend, and who form, I think, the majority of the audience here to-night. Even they would be largely benefited, not by the Single Tax which leaves them still competing with one another for the wealth produced by the workers, but by the establishment of Social-Democracy, and by the amount of necessary labour growing less and less with every improvement in machinery, which would leave them abundant time to cultivate their mental faculties and develop their physical powers without that hideous feeling that every advance they make is made at the expense of their fellow creatures."

From the foregoing we see Mr. Hyndman condemns the Single Tax because it would benefit the capitalist. In his next speech he tells the capitalists they would not be benefitted by the Single Tax, which would really leave them as poor as ever, and if they really wish redress for their wrongs they will have to adopt Social-Democracy.

The following will give an idea of Mr. Hyndman's constructive schemes:—

"Well, by way of palliatives to the existing evils we would shorten the hours of labour by law in every employment where it is possible to do so. On the railways and tramways and in all Government departments eight hours might be made the normal working day, which would give the people more leisure to combine, think, and understand how it is they are expropriated at the present time. We would have free education and free meals in our schools in order that every child might be educated—not merely instructed in the three R's, but educated—and in order that their physical condition might rise to the level of their education. (Loud applause.) Then as the proper housing of the people is of the greatest importance, we would have healthy buildings erected by the communes, municipalities and county councils, to be let at rents to cover the cost of construction and maintenance alone. (Cheers.) Further, we would take this unemployed labour of the of the working classes and organise it under State and communal effort."

We have only one objection to these palliatives, and that is that they do not palliate.

All of them have been tried somewhere or another, and they have done nothing to solve the poverty problem.

Perhaps the best proposal of the lot is the feeding of the school children. But this is not a Collectivist palliative, it falls under the category of problems which men like Cobden and Mill held to be more physical than economic. It should not be forgotten, however, that any palliative of this kind will under present conditions shew itself in reduced wages. Let Mr. Hyndman appeal to his "Iron Law of Wages," and then tell us how the feeding of school children will do anything to eliminate poverty. If wages must fall to subsistence point, this palliative, by relieving the parent of the necessity of feeding the children, will provide the opportunity of reducing his wages.

Of the others, they will all follow from the taxation of land values. Men will not require the State to shorten their hours when they are free to do that for themselves. If we destroy the speculative value in land, men will get work at building houses, and they will be enabled to occupy better houses. Under such a condition houses will not be built at famine prices as at present, but at a rate to remunerate labour and capital, and only the monopolist will suffer. Raise the status of the labourer, and he will refuse your State charity as readily as he refuses private charity. We will not require to organise the unemployed when we get land forced into use by means of the taxation of land values. If land be forced to its best use the disorganisation of industry will disappear. The man who organises industry has to meet all the charges—rent, wages, etc. If he is forced to pay an excessive amount in rent, he is forced to seek relief in the amount he pays in wages. But his acceptance of the excessive price for land only tempts the owner to bleed him further. Wages fall as far as they possibly can fall, and if the landowner still persists industry is disorganised.

All this is being felt to-day, although Mr. Hyndman assures us that "Progress and Poverty" is almost a dead book. If it is, one wonders what kind of book a live one would be. No book of the kind has been and is more in demand in Great Britain and in many other lands. Since its advent twenty-six years ago a conservative estimate is that, embracing all forms and languages, more than two million copies of "Progress and Poverty" have been printed to date, and with the other books written by Henry George, which might be called "The Progress and Poverty Literature," it is estimated that some five million copies have been published. The doctrines of the book have almost a monopoly in political thought to-day, and it can be truly said of Henry George that "he being dead yet speaketh."

In conclusion, we would recommend the pamphlet to every student of political economy and every enquirer regarding social problems. Single Taxers should provide themselves with copies and otherwise promote the sale of the pamphlet as a piece of good propaganda for their side of the question.

W. REID.

News of the Movement.

EASTBOURNE ADOPTS THE RATING OF New Zealand. LAND VALUES ACT.—A poll of the ratepayers of Eastbourne was taken yesterday on the question of rating unimproved value. The ratepayers signified their approval of the method of rating proposed, for out of a total of 102 recorded votes, 78 were for the proposal, and 24 against. The voting at the two booths—city and borough—were as follows:—

	For.	Against.
City,	39	21
Eastbourne,	39	3
Totals,	78	24

The City of Wellington and all adjacent boroughs now rate unimproved values. — *N.Z. Times*, Wellington, 9th August, 1906.