

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

Permit me, please, to express my very high appreciation of your editorial, in the May-June number of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW, entitled, "The Single Tax More than a Fiscal Reform." That is right to the point—spiritual morality as the basis of economic reform! It is much the finest word along that line that I have seen in recent years!

In my own addresses, while I announce my topic, "Tax Reform," I lay down the proposition that right is right and wrong is wrong; and that each of us is responsible in conscience for our attitude toward right and wrong.

I put it in this fashion: Land is the common possession of all; those who use it should pay rent for the privilege to the community; for private individuals to absorb the rent of the land is absolutely wrong; therefore, it should cease. That proposition is fundamental to Land Reform; in other words the whole question is a matter of right and wrong. It is not any question of the way the reform affects me, personally—favorably or unfavorably; it is, simply, what is right? As a clergyman, of course, I must take that point of view; and, further, as an economist, I know that whatever is right, is, in the long run, for the good of all concerned.

I have been considering for some time, getting out another of my little cards, similar to the one entitled, "Tax Reform," putting the issue squarely upon the religio-moral foundation; and shall call it "Land Reform." Following is the purposed outline:

Land, created by God alone, is His gift to His children; it is the common possession and necessity of all.

But land cannot be used, advantageously, for the support and benefit of the members of the community upon the communistic principle; therefore, it is parcelled out to private individuals, for each individual to employ his labor and capital upon to the best advantage. For this privilege, however, to use the common property, the individual should pay rent to the common owner, the community. As, however, no individual can be expected to exert his labor and capital upon common land unless secure in his tenure of the land, the community issues fee simple deeds as evidence of permanency of tenure and negotiability of that tenure, and publicly records such deeds. But this permanency of tenure and negotiability of that tenure does not carry with it legitimate right to privately collect the rent of the land; as the individual would have such right did he absolutely own the land, as he owns his labor-values and his capital.

Land Reform, upon the above basis, is a matter of right, not of custom or expediency.

I like what you wrote in reply to W. D. Albright. "Nationalization" would be a reversion to a primitive condition of this question; just as barter trade would be a similar reversion. As a matter of fact, land could not be leased out to the highest bidder without great likelihood of robbing the lease-holder of some of his labor-and-capital-values; to say nothing of what you point out, "spite-bidding," etc. In many an instance, to dispossess a lease-holder to the highest bidder, would entail very serious loss. For example, suppose a breeder of live stock, either in the Valley of Virginia, or the Blue Grass region of Kentucky (regions concerning which I know much, personally) were forced to give up his Blue Grass farm, under the bidding system: it might ruin the strain of livestock that could best be developed in such a region. That would be a loss to the breeder and the community as well. No; just assess the holder of the permanency of tenure of that particular land for its economic rent; then the community would get its due and the holder of the land would not be despoiled. It is, of course, quite conceivable that a rival breeder would do just that thing—spite-bid—in order to get rid of his rival and his valuable strain. It would commonly happen—just plain human nature to do it! Site-value taxation

socialism, communism, or any other ism that will appeal to their emotion before they will try a scheme that promises mere fiscal reform. Which means that the Single Tax will never get anywhere unless it builds on its moral foundation. When Single Tax comes it will come because 10% of the people understand it and the other 90% take it because it appeals to their moral sense without analysis. Such an appeal can never be made with figures.

Chicago, Ill.

EMIL SCHMIED.