

THE SINGLE TAX—A DEFINITION.

(For the Review.)

Taxes are imposed for the purpose of raising revenue for expenses of government and public improvements. If taxes are levied according to benefits, as they are supposed to be, then that property which is peculiarly benefited by government and public improvements should bear the burden.

It is generally conceded that public improvements add to the selling price of land and to no other form of property, and this fact is now recognized in the tax laws.

Government also not only adds to the selling price of land, but makes any such price possible.

The ownership of land is really nothing more than the ownership of a special privilege granted by the government, giving to the grantees, heirs or assigns the right to exclude all others from a piece of land. This right is enforced by government and could not be enforced in the absence of government. The selling price, therefore, would disappear in the absence of government.

This price is determined by the demand for land, but such demand depends upon desirability, which in turn depends upon title, quality of government, adaptability and location, but in nowise does this demand and consequent value of bare land or location depend upon any individual effort of the owner, *and in this the price of land differs from the price of improvements and all other products.*

The franchise value of railway and other public service corporations being a value of the right of way over certain strips of land, is properly a land value. It is clearly evident that this value results solely from the growth, industry and social activities of the community and, therefore, should not be classed as private property.

The value of land and franchise then, resulting solely from combined social activities, is rightfully public property and as the income from this property is sufficient for all public needs, such income should be appropriated for public use, through a Single Tax on land values, and all taxes on private property abolished.

The benefits that would result from the adoption of the Single Tax would be; (a) the removal of the burden of taxation from industry and consumption; (b) the prevention of exploitation through the private appropriation of social values which attach to land and franchises, thereby causing a more general distribution of wealth, and by preventing the overcapitalization of public service corporations, correct the evils arising from such private ownership; (c) encourage the improvement of land and, by making speculation in land values impossible, discourage the holding of land out of use; (d) by taking the income from public property for public use, permanently solve the question of taxation.

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